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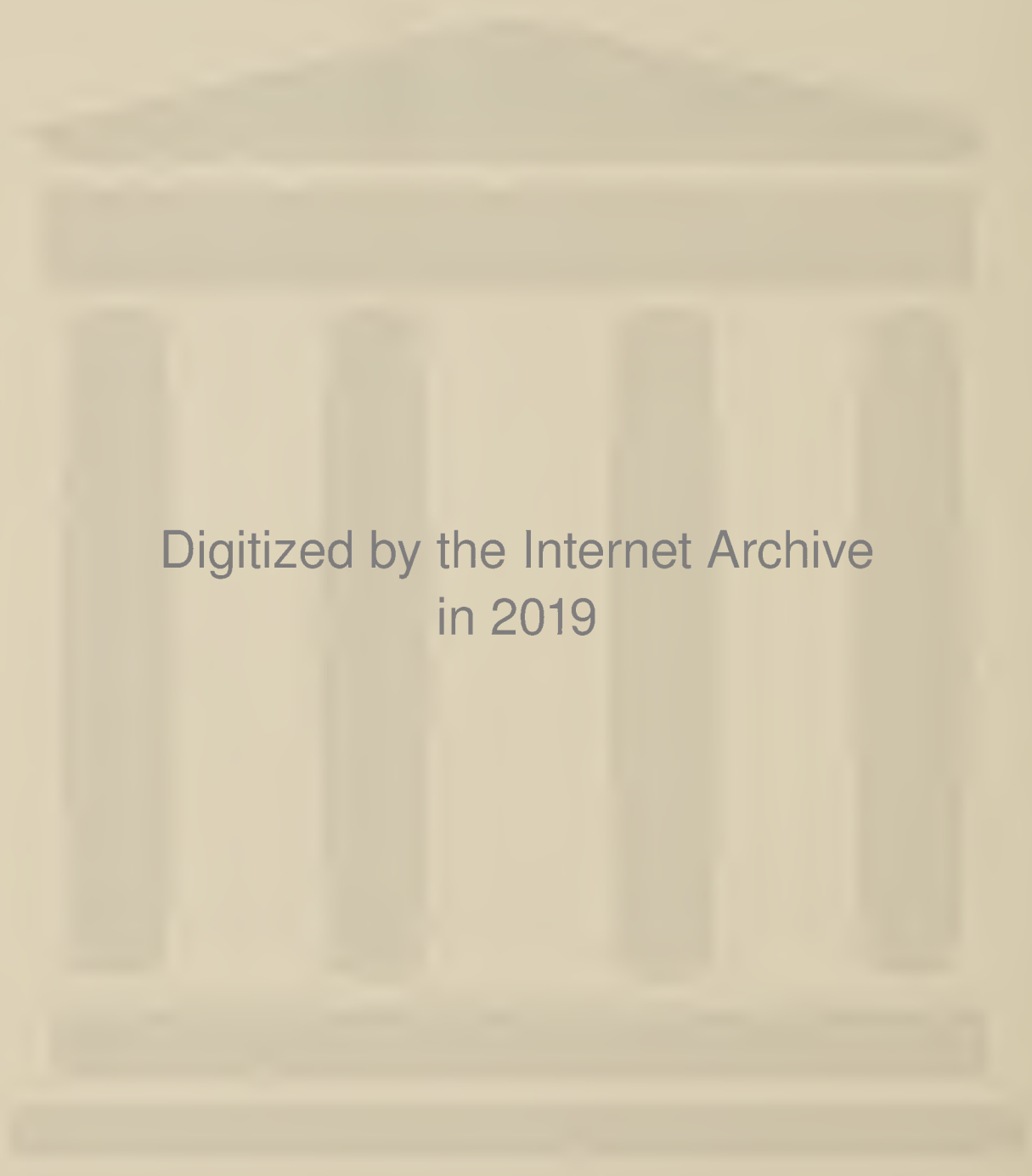
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KENNEBEC YESTERDAYS



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Kennebec Yesterdays

By

ERNEST MARRINER

Waterville, Maine

COLBY COLLEGE PRESS

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COLBY COLLEGE MONOGRAPH No. 21

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1796382

TO

MY WIFE

ELEANOR CREECH MARRINER

LOYAL DAUGHTER

of the

KENNEBEC

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Foreword

In the autumn of 1948 Mr. Carleton Brown, president of the Kennebec Broadcasting Company and manager of Waterville's radio station WTVL, asked me if I would fill a spot on his Sunday evening schedule for two or three weeks until he had secured a regular program. I agreed to provide a fifteen minute program for three Sunday nights, and emphatically informed Mr. Brown that I hadn't anything to talk about for a longer period.

Those three weeks in the fall of 1948 have now stretched into six years, and there have been more than two hundred weekly broadcasts of "Little Talks on Common Things." Sponsored, almost from the beginning, by the Keyes Fibre Company, solely as a public service and with no financial advantage to the company, the program has dealt with old-time things and old-time customs in Maine, especially in the Kennebec Valley.

To my amazement I found hundreds of people interested in the social history of the Pine Tree State. Material has always poured in faster than I could use it. Out of trunks and boxes stored away in attics, came letters and diaries, account books and legal documents. Scrap books prepared by patient hands many decades ago were opened for my inspection. Yellowed newspapers, tied in neat bundles by someone long since dead, were brought to my door. Memories of elderly people were loosened for my ears.

Out of it all came the determination to get some of this social history into print—for it is a kind of history too easily forgotten, the "short and simple annals of the poor," the ordinary concerns of ordinary people, which underlie the social structure we now call Maine. It is not systematic history, not the history of the textbooks nor the carefully documented work of the professional historians with which we are here concerned, but just friendly glimpses of life in Central Maine over the years.

To name any contributor at the expense of so many others would be unkind. I can only take this method of thanking all of the more than two hundred persons who have supplied material about the old stores, the roads and canals, the first railroads and

the little narrow gauges, the old-time doctors and lawyers, the great freshets, the old river craft, the schools of long ago, and all the other topics which have found their way into this book. For indeed this is their book. Without their generous help it could not have been written. If in these pages there is anything worth preserving, it is because the friendly people of the Kennebec Valley have so generously taken me into their own Kennebec yesterdays.

ERNEST C. MARRINER

Waterville

March 2, 1954

Chapter I

OUR LADY KENNEBEC

AUNT HANNAH COOL knew her river. She was even accused of bewitching the fish. Aunt Hannah lived in a low, unpainted house on Silver Street in Waterville. Her garden was full of roots and herbs which she carefully prepared into medicines, free for all sufferers. She was the ministering angel to the sick of the village. But in those early years of the nineteenth century any aged maiden lady was suspect. Something of the Salem spirit had pervaded the ingrowing conscience of New Englanders through all the year.

Living over a tannery on Silver Street was a gentleman of double occupation, tanner and preacher, Elder Jeremiah Powers. His two diversions were fishing and a belief in witchcraft. One night he and a neighbor went out on the Kennebec for fish and failed to get a bite. When they got ashore Jeremiah said to his companion, "We made a mistake. We oughta promised to give Aunt Hannah the first fish we caught. Then we'd a-had a good catch. Instead we got nothing, 'cause Aunt Hannah bewitched the fish." It never occurred to Elder Jeremiah that the fault may have lain not with Aunt Hannah, but with another woman, Our Lady Kennebec.

The Kennebec is not Old Man River just rollin' along. She is rather a gracious lady, her clear, unmuddied form resplendent in the green dress of the evergreens that line her banks. To be sure she exercises her feminine privilege to go on an occasional rampage. When those rare moments occur, she vents her Yankee indignation in torrential flow. Since the early 1800's, when her freshets were first recorded, she has committed some damage every few years, and at least twice, more than a hundred years apart—in 1832 and 1936—she became a demon of wrath, tearing out bridges, destroying buildings, and flooding the lowlands at a cost of many millions of dollars. Some details of those tirades of

Lady Kennebec you will find recorded in a later chapter, more or less appropriately called "Hell and High Water."

Most of the time, however, our lady is calm and smiling, all grace and charm. Unlike Mr. Androscoggin, who married her at Merrymeeting Bay, she needs no deodorant, in the summer time, for she offends no one's nose. She astonishes visitors from other states by the marvelously clear, reflecting powers of her water. Even the sluggish pools that indent her banks are remarkably free from silt and slime. So clean a lady is she that perhaps one can explain her freshet rampages as a commendable determination to get rid of the defiling mud that spring rains and melting ice have washed into her.

It is no accident that she has a lovely, musical name. She comes by it honestly. For the most part, the English settlers in North America were unimaginative folk. Finding the Indian place names long and unpronounceable, they used with annoying duplication simple English adjectives to describe places. Thus every state in the East that has any lakes at all shows on its map a dozen or more Long Ponds, several Pleasant Mountains, Bog Brooks and Sandy Rivers. Admittedly the English adjectives were sometimes more picturesquely descriptive, as in Tumble-down Mountain and Screw Auger Falls. But for the most part simple adjectives sufficed, and frequently the settlers resorted only to measures of distance. For instance, the names Five Mile Brook and Ten Mile Stream, tributaries of the Kennebec, refer to distances above Fort Western.

Fortunately no such obscuring nomenclature was fastened on our lady of Central Maine. From the times of the earliest settlers she was known as Kennebec, though the name was spelled in at least eight different ways. Some sentimentalists regret that the most common spelling of Revolutionary times was abandoned, for it both began and ended with k—*Kennebeck*. It was the intrepid French explorer Champlain who seems to have been responsible. As nearly as he could phoneticize it into French-pronounced Latin letters, the Indians had a word *Quinibequi*, which had something to do with the big river that emptied out of an expansive lake far back from the sea-coast. Remembering that the French *qui* is the English *kee*, we can see how easily the word became at first *Kinibeki*, and finally Kennebec.

Today we know, as Champlain never did, that the Abnaki

Indians had no name for any large extent of either land or water. Just as they had no name for the whole country between the St. Lawrence and the Maine coast, and no name for the great eastern ocean, they had no designation for the whole length of any river. Their place names were always for particular sections wholly observable from one spot—a single mountain, an individual lake, one part of a stream. From the writings of the Jesuit missionaries, especially Father Rale, we know exactly what the Abnakis meant by their Kennebec. They referred definitely and locally to the narrow passage near the mouth of the river, between Bath and Sheepscot Bay. There, even today, the water boils and eddies as the tide surges in and out between the steep ledges. Modern craft negotiate easily enough, but in those days before the woodsman's axe and the engineer's dams had reduced the flow, it must have provided a hazardous experience for the Indian in his frail birch canoe.

Like most primitive people, the Abnakis were animists, attaching a spirit to everything in nature, especially to the dangerous and the awesome. They believed all physical phenomena to be the work of either benevolent or angry gods. The historian Schoolcraft, in his important book *American Indians*, points out that even in our own time the Chippewa word for serpent is Kinaibik, and that this was almost certainly the Abnaki word for snaky monster. Hence, when the Abnakis told Champlain about *Quinibiki*, they referred to the serpent dragons coiled in the mysterious depths at that particular place near the mouth of the river where the creature's incessant writhings stirred the waters into a ceaseless whirlpool.

The extension of the name to the entire river came gradually, and why it happened is open to anyone's guess. The whole story is surrounded by much mystery. But it has one interesting angle. While it was the lower Kennebec that first got the name, it was that very part of the river which first lost it. For more than 150 years the stretch of river from Merrymeeting Bay to the ocean was called the Sagadahoc. Above the Bay, the stream from the west was the Androscoggin, that from the east was the Kennebec.

Englishmen had no such localized practice for place-names as did the Indians. As they came to make their homes up the river farther and farther from the first settlements near Fort

Popham, they naturally applied the name everyone on the lower river was using—Kennebec. In spite of what the good people of Lewiston and Brunswick may tell you—in spite even of the generous impulse that causes us to speak of the merry meeting of two equally major rivers—to the early settlers the eastern river was the main stream. There is no record that anyone ever extended the name Kennebec to the western river. Logic called for its extension rather to the eastern waterway because that was the main river; the Androscoggin flowed into the Kennebec.

Just what happened to give the waterways three different names we do not know. Perhaps dwellers along the Androscoggin arose in indignant pride, pointing out that actually two big rivers met at the Bay. If the folks from Bowdoinham to Skowhegan Falls insisted on calling their river the Kennebec and wouldn't agree to call the lower river the Androscoggin, let there be a fair compromise. Let neither name be applied to the waters below Merrymeeting Bay. Let it be called the Sagadahoc. Of course this is all guess-work, but Sagadahoc the lower river did become, and it was well into the middle of the nineteenth century, after steamboats had come regularly to ply the waters, that the whole river from Moosehead Lake to the ocean was again called the Kennebec, with the Androscoggin joining it at the bay.

What changes Our Lady Kennebec has seen! What she witnessed during those long centuries between her birth, when the glaciers receded 25,000 years ago, and the coming of the white man scarcely more than 300 years ago, we shall never know. She has seen plenty of change in that short portion of her life spanned by the last three centuries. No longer do the huge pines float down to become masts for His Majesty's ships. Never again will the big schooners transport her frozen surface by the millions of tons not only to New York and Philadelphia, to Charleston and Savannah, but also to Cuba and Jamaica, to India and Ceylon. A hundred years ago how she would have scorned the humble, short sticks of pulpwood that represent the only forest product which now covers long stretches of her surface in the summer months. Gone are the big sawmills that once dotted her banks. In 1870 there were no less than eleven of those plants at Kendalls Mills alone. Little is now left at Fairfield Village to show how it got and deserved the old name of Kendalls Mills.

Our lady once saw thousands of sail. Off the slips at Bath and Bowdoinham went the big clippers that carried American name and fame over the seven seas. All the way from Georgetown to Waterville, shipyards were once alive with the sound of hammer and saw. In 1853, for instance, more ships were launched from Kennebec yards than from all the rest of Maine. It was from the Vassalboro yard at Getchell's Corner that was launched the ocean-going ship which brought the first peanuts from Africa to the United States. Once small ocean craft came as far up the river as Waterville, the dam and long-since abandoned lock at Augusta permitting their passage around Cushnoc Falls. Even as late as 1890, the last of the up-river steamers, the *City of Waterville*, made the trip from her birthplace in Bangor down the Penobscot, around the coast to Bath, up the river to Augusta, through the lock, and on to Waterville.

Now all of the sail, except a few tiny yachts and most of the steamers, are gone. In the days of the price wars between the Vanderbilts and local interests one could go by fast steamer from Augusta to Boston for twenty-five cents. Now one cannot go by that method at all. The dreams of the Moors at Waterville came to glorious fruition. Their modest yard, near where the Lockwood Mills now stand, grew into an industry that turned out not only the smaller river boats, but the hulls of ocean-going vessels, towed down to Hallowell and Gardiner to be rigged for the sea. When William T. Haines attempted to revive the river traffic in 1890, it was too late. The iron horse had then become master of inland transportation. The building of that last steamer, the *City of Waterville*, was not only a financial mistake; it was a nostalgic gesture.

Strange to relate, in earliest days of the white settlements, the river was not a source of water power. For more than half the year the current was too swift for the up-and-down sawmills and the crude grist mills of the frontier settlements. That explains why the first mills were built, not on the large rivers, but on the tributaries. There the flow could be controlled by small dams and simple diversions. The casual observer may wonder why the Kennebec's larger communities are nearly all on the western bank. As a matter of fact most of the early settlements were on the east bank, as is Fort Western, site of a trading post of the Plymouth Colony, and Fort Halifax, farthest up the river

of all the colonial forts. For several years after the Revolution, the Winslow side of the river had more inhabitants than the Waterville side; Pittston long had more people than Hallowell; Dresden was once a much larger place than Richmond. Why then did Hallowell, Gardiner, the western part of Augusta, Waterville, and Fairfield become the large industrial centers while communities on the opposite bank dwindled in population and importance? The answer is water power, the kind of water power needed by early developing industry—the kind supplied not by the almost untameable big river, but by the smaller streams that entered it. And those streams which have waterfalls are predominantly on the west side. For instance, there is no natural fall of water on the Sebasticook all the way from Winslow to Benton Falls. The present fall created by the dam at Winslow is man-made, and is only about fifty years old. On the other hand, the Messalonskee, entering the Kennebec on the west side, had an appreciable drop with three distinct natural falls, easily converted into important power sites. When Waterville became a separately incorporated town in 1802, its industries had been established chiefly along the Messalonskee. Thus does topography affect the destinies of men.

Maine is called Vacationland, and to parts of the Kennebec region vacationists still come. The beautiful reaches of tidal coast and islands below Bath lure thousands of summer visitors each year. To the regions above Norridgewock—to Solon and Bingham, to Caratunk and The Forks, come the sportsmen seeking fish and game. An annual event of nation-wide fame is the August sermon of Rev. Arthur MacDougal, preached at his church in Bingham, to his fellow sportsmen assembled from a dozen states. The central Kennebec, from Skowhegan to Gardiner, however, presents a picture that will astonish the outlander who thinks that Maine is only what Toynbee called it, a land of “watermen, woodsmen and hunters.” Here is a significant part of industrial Maine. Here are paper and pulp mills, shoe factories, cotton mills, wood working plants. One great factory grew out of Martin Keyes’ observation of workmen eating lunch off big maple chips as plates. From that Yankee observation came the first fibre dishes in the world. From the Kennebec the big ice houses with their long-tailed slides have disappeared. The profitable runs of salmon and shad come up the river no more. But

there are compensations. The steady hum of modern industry, never suspected by John Winslow's traders or Ferdinando Gorges' governors, now plays its welcome accompaniment to the age-old sound of the flowing Kennebec.

Chapter II

HONEST INJUN

IT was June 1, 1605, two years before Jamestown, fifteen years before any Pilgrim foot stepped on Plymouth Rock. Captain George Weymouth paced the deck of his ship, anchored at the mouth of St. George's river on the coast of Maine. What could he do to convince Lord Arundel that there was anything in this new land worth any Englishman's attention? He had failed to find the Northwest Passage. He had seen no gold nor precious stones. Suddenly he stopped his pacing. A canoe approached the ship, filled with those copper-skinned beings with whom Weymouth and his crew had already established friendly contact.

The Indians had previously visited on board the ship, and the crew had once gone ashore to visit the natives, exchanging man for man as hostages. "We must treat them kindly," mused Weymouth, as the canoe drew nearer on that June day, "because we intend to inhabit their country. Besides, trade with them can be exceeding profitable. Was it not only last week that I gave the sagamore five shillings' worth of glass and knives for forty beautiful skins of beaver and otter? Yes, we must keep them friends, yet we must do something to convince My Lord Arundel."

Five tall Indians stepped from the canoe to Weymouth's ship. When they next stepped off that ship it was three thousand miles away at a London dock. Weymouth had seized all five, shut them up in the hold, and in the middle of June had sailed away to England.

It was a July day in 1675. Four sailors from an English ship, anchored near where the city of Saco now stands, were in a small boat, fishing with hand lines, when one of them asked: "Do you think it is true that an Indian child can swim naturally, like a dog, and doesn't have to be taught?" That started a sharp dispute, two taking one side and two the other. They had already

agreed on a wager when one of them asked the practical question, "How are we going to settle it?"

Just then a canoe came into sight. As it drew near, the sailors saw that it contained only an Indian woman and an infant child. "Here's our chance," shouted one of the sailors. "Now we'll find out whether a papoose can naturally swim." With boisterous humor, they overturned the canoe. The child sank, but the mother, diving after it, brought it up alive. The sailors, sensing that they had gone too far, hastily departed.

Perhaps those sailors never learned that the child was a cherished son of Squando, powerful chief of the Saco tribe. Even had the child lived, Squando would have been angry. But when, a few days later, the infant died as a result of its exposure and immersion, the chief's wrath was terrible, as many an innocent settler was destined to learn.

It was June 10, 1676. Abraham Shurte of Pemaquid, constant friend of the Indians, had become much concerned at the rising discontent among the tribes. If they should go over in large numbers to the French, all the English settlements from the Penobscot to the Piscataqua would be doomed. Already the natives along the Sheepscot and some of those on the Kennebec had been forced to give up their guns. Hunger had begun to stalk the Indian villages.

Shurte succeeded in getting the leading chiefs to assemble at Taconnet, present site of Waterville and Winslow, for the purpose of coming to terms with the English settlers. On that June day, when white men and Indians met near those unharnessed falls of the Kennebec, the Indian spokesman was Chief Assiminasqua. He said: "You told us to give up our guns and powder, or you would kill us. To keep the peace, we were forced to part with our hunting guns. We are hungry; our wives and children starve. Where shall we buy powder and shot for our winter's hunting when the last kernel of our corn has been eaten? What good will powder do us if we have no guns? Shall we leave Englishmen and go to the French? Or shall we die? Englishmen, give us back our guns."

There was one conspicuous absence at the Council of Taconnet. Squando, chief of the Sacos was not there. He had not forgotten nor forgiven what English sailors did to his child. Suppose Squando should get hold of the returned guns. The very

thought was too much for the English consultants at Taconnet. They refused the Indian request, and from that day made the natives ready allies of the French.

What is the point of these three recorded incidents? It is simply to emphasize that the Indian of legend—the cruel, slinking, murderous savage—is not the true Indian. It is especially a false picture of those people variously called the Abnakis, the Norridgewocks, the Canibas, the Kennebecs—the Indians of Central Maine. These were, by all contemporary accounts, naturally a friendly and peace-loving people, aroused to retaliation only when suffering a serious offense. The three incidents related could be multiplied many times. It would be hard to find a case in which the Indian was the first offender.

Much has been made of the Indian's torture of prisoners, of scalping and burning. Their cruelty in warfare was indeed recorded fact, but what did one find in England or on the continent in the seventeenth century? There too torture was applied, not only to men, but to women. There is, however, no record that the Abnakis ever mistreated a woman captive.

What sort of people were these 'honest Injuns' of the Kennebec? How did they live? All authorities on the American Indians agree that the Abnakis were more gentle and immediately more friendly than the Indians of any other region. Although relying for subsistence chiefly on hunting and fishing, they raised considerable corn among ringed trees, or in open clearings. Like the Narragansets who greeted the Pilgrims at Plymouth, the Abnakis fertilized their corn with fish, dropping one or two into each hill. Their wigwams were cone-shaped and covered with birch bark or woven mats. Several families occupied a single dwelling. Sometimes their villages were enclosed by palisades. Each village had its council house of considerable size, oblong in shape and roofed with bark. In addition to a war chief, each tribe had a civil chief whose duty it was to preserve order through advice rather than command. A grand council, consisting of the chiefs and two men from each family, determined matters of great importance. A general council composed of all the tribe, both men and women, decided questions relating to war.

These were the people who inhabited the Valley of the Kennebec. These were the true first settlers. Our Lady River was their highway and her banks were their home. Up and down her

clear waters they traveled with the seasons, seeking bear and moose, salmon and trout. They made crude traps to snare the otter and the beaver, and in the long winters they beat off the savage wolves. Their weapons were stone-headed clubs, bows and arrows. Their tools were made from stone, flint and bone. Their clothing was fashioned from the skins of animals and plaited grass. Perhaps their greatest accomplishment, as artisans, was the birch bark canoe. It was light yet durable; it was expendable, for another could be quickly made; it was thoroughly adapted to these first settlers of Maine, whom the dense, trackless forest persuaded to stay near the flowing streams.

If we at all admire the peacefulness, the dignity, and the nobility of the Abnaki, as the Gilbert and Weymouth parties first saw them early in the seventeenth century, we may even forgive the flowery rhetoric of Kingsbury, who says of the Indians of the Kennebec: "We first see the Indian as proprietor of all the lakes and rivers, hills and meadows. His subjects were the beasts and birds and fishes, his scepter the tomahawk, his chariot the bark canoe. From Moosehead to the waters of the sea he exercised his sovereignty, and monarch like, made progress through his forest realm, levying tribute according to his humble needs."

Who were the Abnakis? How were they related to other Indians? In the first place, we must be reminded that all we know about the Maine Indians comes to us second hand. They left no written records, no carving on stone. Unlike the Aztecs and the Mayas, they had not developed the art of writing; they possessed no calendar. They could speak of "many moons," but not exactly how many. Their number sense scarcely exceeded five or six. What we know about them comes from the white men with whom they came in contact. There is no Indian history by Indians themselves.

In the second place, there is the difficulty of language. Sometimes, with widely varying results, an Indian name was crudely transliterated into English sounds. At other times, a name which Englishmen had heard elsewhere was applied. Hence the same group of Indians would come to have half a dozen different names in colonial times.

Finally, there was great confusion concerning what a particular name covered. Did it mean a local group, a single settlement or village? Did it mean a tribe, or did it apply to a whole

group of tribes, an Indian nation? The word Abnaki, for instance, is used in all three senses, and one must be on constant guard as to which meaning a given colonial manuscript is using. With this general warning let us see what modern ethnologists have discovered about the Maine Indians.

In spite of all subsequent attempts at improvement, the best history of colonial Maine is still Williamson's, written in 1832. That history is astoundingly modern in its method, completely documented, not merely by source titles, but even by pages. When a manuscript source is cited, it is carefully described. Nevertheless Williamson wrote 120 years ago, and scholars have learned much about our Indians since his time. His division of tribes and their relationship is not to be trusted, not because his research lacks thoroughness or honesty, but because his sources were limited and themselves uninformed. The modern view concerning our Maine Indians is best found in a monumental work compiled in 1907 and published by the Smithsonian Institution. It is the work of a dozen expert ethnologists and is entitled *Handbook of American Indians*.

Williamson said that the Abnakis were a branch of the Algonquian family, and the Smithsonian volume confirms that statement. But right here one must distinguish between two words—Algonkin and Algonquian. The Algonkins were a Canadian tribe, inhabiting the north shores of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence. They were a small geographic group. Algonquian, however, is a linguistic distinction, referring to all the Indians whose dialects, according to the scholars, had the same common language base. They included all Indians from the Atlantic coast to the Rocky Mountains, from Hudson's Bay to Georgia, except for an area in the East, inhabited by Iroquian tribes. The data about the various groups that made up this language family are so meager that we cannot determine whether certain bodies of them were confederacies, tribes, bands or clans. Early explorers, observing part of a tribe settled at one place and part at another, have frequently taken them for different peoples, and have dignified single villages as tribes. Throughout the greater part of New England, the Smithsonian volume warns us, it is impossible to distinguish between tribes and villages. The Indians seemed to be grouped into small communities, each taking its name from

the principal village or from some feature of the nearby landscape.

Modern ethnologists classify the Algonquians into several divisions, one of which they call the Northeastern. That division, they tell us, has two groups: the Montaguais, composed of five tribes in Quebec and the maritime provinces; and the Abnaki, which included seven tribes—the Micmac, the Malecite, the Passamaquoddy, the Arosaguntacook, the Sokoki, the Penobscot, and the Norridgewock.

We note, therefore, that the name Abnaki sometimes applied to all the Indians of Maine and New Brunswick. The Smithsonian scholars tell us that the word meant “light in the east” or “morning.” The Abnakis were the people of the dawn, of the East. Says the Smithsonian *Handbook*, “The name was used by the English and French of the colonial period to designate an Algonquian confederacy centering in Maine, and used by the Algonquian tribes themselves to include all of their stock resident on the Atlantic seaboard. By the Puritans they were called the Tarratines. In later times, after the main body had fled to Canada, the name was applied to the Penobscot tribe.”

We have seen that one tribe of the great Abnaki confederacy was the Norridgewocks. Their chief village was at Old Point, near the present village of Norridgewock, but they controlled the river from Moosehead Lake to Merrymeeting Bay. At one time their chief had his headquarters, not at Old Point, but on Swan Island down the river. It is this tribe, or at least a portion of them who were called the Canibas or the Kennebecs. For all practical purposes we may say that the Abnakis, the Norridgewocks, the Canibas and the Kennebecs were the same people, because by the time of the French and Indian war, in the middle of the eighteenth century, most writers were applying the word Abnaki, not to the old confederacy, but only to those Indians along the Kennebec.

Thirty years apart, in 1616 and in 1646, Captain John Smith and Father Durillettes visited an Indian village somewhere between the Cushnoc Falls at what is now Augusta and Ticonic Falls at Waterville—very possibly near where Getchell’s Corner in the town of Vassalboro is now located. Interestingly enough both visitors called that village Kennebec.

The story of the Indian wars is sordid and depressing. In 1680 there were more than a hundred white families settled between Merrymeeting Bay and Skowhegan Falls. In 1725 there were only two white families all along the river north of Woolwich. All others had fled or had died under the tomahawk. King Philip's War had been followed by eight other Indian uprisings. Alliance between Indians and the French had placed a price on every Englishman's scalp. Only after the building of Fort Halifax and Fort Western in the middle of the century was settlement safe again. It was a terrible price to pay for trying to find out whether an Indian baby could swim, for taking captives to show Lord Arundel the possibilities in a new land, for refusal to return to the Indians their hunting guns. It was indeed a terrible price—honest Injun!

What happened to the Kennebec Indians? A few of them were absorbed by the Penobscots and other Abnaki tribes, but before the Revolution most of them had gone to Canada, to mingle with the tribes along the St. Lawrence. A few remained until well into the nineteenth century, but they had isolated and even nomadic dwellings, and the Indian villages disappeared except for those established by the state as reservations. One of the last Indians to leave the Kennebec was a Norridgewock to whom the whites gave the name Peerpole. He had become a good Christian and every year took his humble offering to the church at Quebec. Finally with his family and his possessions on a hand sled he left his old homeland forever, making his way northward through the forest to the adopted land of his surviving tribesmen.

Two warriors of the Norridgewocks had the distinction of being the first Indians to fight on the American side in the Revolution. It happened this way. Readers of Kenneth Roberts's *Arundel* and of the factual accounts of Arnold's Expedition in 1775 know that, preceding the advance of Arnold's regiments up the river, a scouting party carefully plotted out the route, the stopping places, and the portages. Not far from The Forks, where the Dead River joins the East Branch of the Kennebec, the scouting party found, attached to a tree, a rude birch-bark map, showing the various brooks and streams of the region. Some Indian had obviously left this map for the benefit of his fellow-tribesmen. A number of Indians were known to be living

near The Forks, but the scouting party had not seen any of them. The furtive Indians apparently suspected these invaders of being hated Englishmen, like those who had killed their beloved Father Rale at Norridgewock fifty years earlier. Somehow they learned that these men were enemies of the English, and about twenty of them joined the expedition. Two of them, Natanis and Sabatis, went through to the end, taking part in the assault on Quebec, January 1, 1776. Natanis was wounded, thus being the first Indian in American history to rate the Purple Heart. Although that decoration was unknown in 1776, it is worth recording that a Norridgewock Indian merited it six months before the Declaration of Independence.

So many stories are told of the brutal Indian raids and massacres that it is well to remind ourselves of the kindness and benevolence of many an Abnaki brave. One of the most memorable of those instances concerns the Forbes family in 1784. Although the sufferings of the Forbes family on their terrible journey are referred to by various historians, the original, contemporary account is a pamphlet of twenty-four pages written by Arthur Bradman and printed at the office of Thomas Baker Wait at Portland in 1791, and sold by the printer at nine pence a copy. Like most books and pamphlets of the time, this one bears a long, descriptive title: "A narrative of the extraordinary sufferings of Mr. Robert Forbes, his wife and five children, during an unfortunate journey through the wilderness from Canada to the Kennebec river in the year 1784; in which three of their children were starved to death. Taken partly from the mouths of the survivors and partly from an imperfect journal, and compiled at their request."

Under the guidance of what the pamphlet calls "three Dutchmen," Mr. Forbes and his family set out from Nouvelle Bois on the Chaudiere river on March 17, 1784. The five children ranged in age from fifteen months to thirteen years. The household goods, provisions, and the four youngest children were hauled on hand sleds. Father, mother and the thirteen year old boy traveled on snowshoes, because the winter snows had not yet melted. They found the travelling so difficult close to the river that they were obliged to leave the valley and strike off across country. Soon the situation became so bad that they had to abandon the sleds. With no way to transport all four of the younger children,

it was decided to leave them and the mother in a rudely constructed camp while the men and the boy pushed on to Megantic Pond, where help might be found.

After a day's journey from the camp where mother and children had been left, the Dutchmen informed Forbes that they had no intention of returning with him to his family, but would now leave him and make their own way through to the Kennebec. Forcing him to give up the major part of his precious provisions, Forbes' heartless companions left him only one poor axe, a small firelock, and two loaves of bread. That was all Forbes could take back to his wife and children. Here was a whole family—four of them children too small to walk long distances—without guides or compass, destitute of provisions, nine days' journey from the nearest inhabitants of Canada and more than 150 miles from any dwelling on the Kennebec.

On his return from the place where the Dutchmen had deserted him, Forbes had come across an Indian camp at Megantic Point, a camp obviously used only a few days before. If they could find that Indian, reasoned Forbes, they might get both food and guidance to the Kennebec. Return to Canada was out of the question. The family therefore decided to go on. The oldest girl, though only seven, now joined her mother on foot, while on two crudely constructed sleds to replace those abandoned when they left the Chaudiere the father and son tried to haul the others. Facing a raging storm, they took three days to reach Megantic Pond. Time and again Mr. Forbes had to carry two children in his arms while the mother carried the youngest, and the boy had to do his best to pull and lift the empty sleds.

Great was their relief to see smoke rising about the trees as they approached the pond. Here indeed was other human life—an Indian whom, to their great joy, the Forbes family recognized as a Christian Abnaki they had known in Canada. Like many others of the baptised Norridgewocks, he was known by the name of Jean Baptiste. Having recently killed a moose, Jean gave the Forbes family all the meat they could carry, and agreed to pilot them to the Kennebec. It was not Jean's fault that he could not fulfill his mission as guide. When they were about to start, Jean's squaw was taken violently ill, and Mrs. Forbes insisted that Jean must not leave the woman alone in the wilderness, even for the time necessary to get the Forbes party to the

Kennebec. So Jean made a crude map on a piece of bark, noting carefully the bends, falls and carrying places along the river.

Obviously Forbes was an inexperienced traveler. Had he followed Jean's directions, all might have been well. But rocky ledges, steep hills, and deep gullies turned him aside and caused him to get off the course. Long before they could see any sign of the main river, their provisions again got perilously low. So Forbes had to make the same difficult decision again—to leave mother and younger children behind, while he and the boy pushed on until they found a habitation and could return with aid.

It was April 12 when father and son left the rest of the family with only a pound of moose meat and half a pound of tallow to keep mother and children alive. Ten days later the travelers had not reached any settlement, but they did encounter two hunters, Jonathan Crosby and Luke Sawyer, who gave them food and guided them to the settlement at Seven Mile Brook, a short distance above Norridgewock. Forbes and the boy were completely exhausted, but three men of the settlement agreed to rescue Mrs. Forbes and the children. Thirteen days of intense anxiety ensued for the waiting Forbes, only to end in despair when the party returned without his loved ones. No trace of them had been found. Twenty-four days had now elapsed since Forbes had left them. They must certainly be dead.

It was May 28, after the spring floods had subsided, before a new party could start out to find the bodies of Mrs. Forbes and the children. Now, with travelling easier than in April, and with Forbes giving more rational directions, they were able to find the place where Forbes had left his family. To their amazement they found the mother and one child still alive. It had been fifty days since five persons had been left in the wilderness with nothing but a little moose meat and tallow. Nor had they found any other nourishment except cold water and the inside bark of the fir tree. Furthermore, the nights are cold in the Maine woods in April and May, and these unfortunate persons had been seven weeks without fire. Three of the children succumbed, but five-year-old Peggy proved stronger and was found alive with her mother. The rescuers carried mother and child on a litter by land and in a canoe by water until they arrived safely at Norridgewock.

On the final page of the old Portland pamphlet, the author added a postscript, showing what had happened between the event in 1784 and the printed account in 1791: "Mr. Forbes and his wife, with their surviving children, *one born only a month after her rescue*, are now living in the town of New Gloucester. Mrs. Forbes, far from the emaciated state in which her rescuers found her, is now a large and corpulent woman, and the child to which she gave birth soon after her arrival at Norridgewock is *a healthy and promising boy.*"

Mr. Forbes lost three small members of his family, but of all seven there would have been no survivors at all had it not been for the kindly aid of Jean Baptiste. Only his moose meat and his birch-bark map enabled the family to get as far as they did before the wife and four children had to be left behind. Author Bradman could never have written the happy postscript to his pamphlet save for the providential presence at Megantic Pond of one "Honest Injun."

Chapter III

WHOSE LAND?

IN the picturesque coastal village of New Harbor, in the town of Bristol, half way down the historic Pemaquid peninsula, is a granite boulder with a bronze tablet. The inscription is headed in big capitals by the word Samoset, and it records the place and occasion of the first deed of land ever executed in New England.

Maine folk delight in pointing out to their Massachusetts cousins the identity of Samoset. He was the Indian chief whom the Pilgrims at Plymouth found so unusual that their journals duly recorded their first meeting with him. Under date of Friday, March 16, 1621, *Mourt's Relation* has this item: "There presented himself a savage, which caused an alarm. He very boldly came alone, and along the houses, straight to the rendezvous. We intercepted him, not suffering him to go inside, as he undoubtedly would, out of his boldness. He saluted us in English and bade us welcome. He said he was not of these parts, but of Moratiggon, and one of the sagamores or lords thereof, it lying hence a day's sail with a great wind and five days by land. He was a tall, straight man."

Everyone knows that the first permanent colony in New England was at Plymouth in 1620. How did it happen, then, that in the spring of 1621 these Plymouth settlers were greeted by an Indian speaking English? Where had Samoset learned his English? He had learned it, of course, from the Englishmen who since 1603 had been coming to the vicinity of Pemaquid and had stayed for varying lengths of time. One story has it that he had been one of the captives carried to England by Weymouth in 1607 and had later been returned to his home-land on Muscongus Bay. In that story he may have been confused with his friend Squando, the Indian whom Samoset introduced to the Plymouth colonists and who taught them to fertilize their corn with fish. Squando may quite possibly have been one of the Indians captured

by Weymouth. Anyhow, when the Pilgrims talked with Samoset and Squando, they talked with them in English—English that those Indians had learned a dozen years before any Pilgrim father saw Plymouth Rock.

It was this Samoset who, at New Harbor on July 15, 1625, signed his mark to a deed making a certain grant to John Brown. It was easy to confuse Samoset with the well-known English name, Somerset, and that is what the Indian chieftain is called in the document. This is what it says:

Know ye that I, Capt. John Somerset and Unongoit, Indian sagamores, they being the proper heirs to all lands on both sides of Muscongus River, have bargained and sold to John Brown of New Harbor this certain tract or parcel of land as followeth: beginning at Pemaquid Falls and so running a direct course to the head of New Harbor, from thence to the south end of Muscongus Island, and so running five and twenty miles into the country north by east, and thence eight miles, northwest by west, thence south by west to Pemaquid where first begun. To all which lands the said Captain John Somerset and Unongoit have granted and made over to the said John Brown in consideration of fifty skins, to us in hand paid, to our full satisfaction, and we do bind ourselves and our heirs forever to defend the said John Brown and his heirs in the quiet and peaceable possession of the said lands.

What did John Brown get for his fifty skins? The wording of the deed makes it clear that he thus obtained possession to all the land in the present towns of Nobleboro and Jefferson, part of Newcastle and nearly all of Bristol—a tract of more than 200 square miles. John Brown thought he had made legal purchase of the land, but that was not Samoset's intent. By the end of the 17th century, when Indian deeds to white men became more common, there was no excuse for any white purchaser failing to know what the selling Indian chief intended, but as early as 1625 business contacts with the Indians had scarcely begun, and John Brown may have been honestly mistaken.

The point is that it was always the white man who wrote the deed. No Indian could read or write in his own language, much less in English. Written like the usual property deeds in the English shires, these documents depict as signing over to white men ownership of certain lands. When an Indian chief put his mark to such a paper he had a very different understanding of the transaction. The Abnaki Indians had no concept of the private ownership of land. Indeed this was true of all American Indians. No individual, no tribe owned the soil any more than

they owned the wild animals that trod it. The soil, like the living creatures, belonged to the Great Spirit. The tribes had the use of it—hunting and fishing rights upon it, the right to erect their lodges and bury their dead, and to plant in its warm bosom the precious seeds of corn. When a chieftain signed a deed like Samoset's to John Brown he thought he was doing always one of two things. Either he was vacating his own hunting, lodging and planting rights for the white man to use, or as was more frequently the case, he was sharing with the white man rights the Indian already enjoyed. The white man could build his house, plant his crop and hunt game on the lands just as the Indian did, and the Indian seller agreed to protect the white buyer in those equal rights.

Of course that is not what the deeds say. They are worded as outright sales of land ownership. When John Brown, in the year following his bargain with Samoset, recorded his deed before Abraham Shurte at Pemaquid, he was establishing what would appear to be a valid claim. Except for one thing! Somebody else claimed ownership to the same land under the impressive weight of British law, and that somebody was the King of England.

The land titles of Maine do not descend from Indian deeds; they go back to the British crown. Yet before the English settlers from the Piscataqua to the Penobscot could get clear, unclouded titles, many complications harrassed and oppressed them. It all began far back at the close of the fifteenth century, when those Portugese navigators, John and Sebastian Cabot, in the employ of the King of England, laid claim to vast regions in North America in the name of that sovereign king. Relying on that claim of discovery, a hundred years later in 1606, King James I granted charters to the London and Plymouth companies, dividing between them the lands in North America between the 34th and the 45th parallels of latitude. The London Company settled Jamestown. In 1620 a stock company in England, successors to the Plymouth Company, and calling themselves the Council for New England, secured an absolute grant to lands between the 40th and 48th parallels, thus overlapping part of the grant held by the London Company.

Meanwhile the French were busy. While the English settlers sponsored by the New England Council were settling at Ply-

mouth and later spread out north along the coast to Cape Elizabeth, French settlements were multiplying along the St. Lawrence and the Bay of Fundy. The territory that is now Central Maine lay between them and was claimed by both. Herein lay the settler's first difficulty as to the ownership of his land, even if he ignored all Indian claims. Was a deed from Plymouth good, or did the French own the land? It was a dispute not finally settled until the Treaty of Paris in 1763.

How did the Plymouth colonists come to lay claim to the Valley of the Kennebec? In 1629 the Council for New England from their British headquarters granted to William Bradford at the new settlement of Plymouth, for the use of the Colony of New Plymouth, for trading and fishing, "a tract of land on both sides of the Kennebec river." This grant came to be known as the Kennebec Patent, and its provisions were: "The said council grants and assigns to William Bradford, his heirs, associates and assigns, all that tract of land or part of New England in America which lieth from the utmost limits of the Cobbosseecontee, which adjoineth the river Kennebec toward the western ocean and a place called the falls of Negamkike in America, and the space of 15 English miles on each side of the river." The tract included the land between Woolwich and the southern line of what is now the town of Anson. This left a vast, unclaimed region to the north, which was afterwards called the Upper Kennebec.

In 1635 the so-called Plymouth Council (the Council for New England) surrendered their charter to the King, and about the same time Bradford assigned to the Plymouth Colony his personal claim to the Kennebec lands. Now comes further confusion. In 1622 the Council for New England had granted to Ferdinando Gorges and Charles Mason land between the Merrimac and the Sagadahoc (the old name for the Kennebec below Merrymeeting Bay). To this tract they gave the name Province of Maine. Gorges and Mason divided the land, the former taking the part east of the Piscataqua and naming it New Somersetshire. One of the last acts of King Charles I, before his dethronement and execution, was to grant to Gorges in 1639 a more comprehensive charter, designating Gorges as Lord Palatine of the Province of Maine. This was a typical feudal grant of the kind English kings had been issuing since the days of William the Conqueror. It gave Gorges not only the right to sell off the lands to settlers, but

also made him a vice-royal ruler with power to maintain an army, execute martial law and appoint clergy. Gorges ruled his palatinate in medieval fashion, controlling church, courts and business on his lands, and placing feudal reservation on all land titles issued by him.

There was yet another conflicting claim. The Council for New England had made a small grant, inside the other grants, as early as 1630. Called the Lygonia Grant, this was purchased in 1643 by Alexander Rigby. The Civil War in England, which brought Gorges' patron king to the block, enabled Rigby to extend his control over most of Maine. Cromwell's government, in 1646, confirmed Rigby as the rightful proprietor of the lands between the Kennebunk river and the Sagadahoc. In 1650 Rigby died, and his son failed to maintain his father's influence with the British government. The rapidly growing Massachusetts Bay Colony seized its chance, appointing commissioners to make surveys based on the original Massachusetts Bay charter, as a result of which Massachusetts laid claim both to Gorges' Province of Maine and to Rigby's Lygonia, set up a court at York and gradually extended control to the Kennebec river.

Strife between conflicting claims, especially between the Gorges interests and those of Massachusetts continued for many years. First one side would set up magistrates protected by soldiers, then the other side would do the same. Finally in 1677 the heirs of Gorges sold all their claims in the Province of Maine to the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

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Other conflicting claims were settled by the new charter granted by William and Mary in 1691 to the Province of Massachusetts Bay. It gave to Massachusetts not only the territory of the old Bay Colony, but also the claims of the Plymouth Colony and certain lands in Nova Scotia. Thus were confirmed the land titles issued by Bradford's Plymouth Colony, and the whole area was designated as the Royal Province of Maine. The Massachusetts Province immediately incorporated the Maine territory into a county called Yorkshire. In 1760 it was divided into three counties, York, Cumberland and Lincoln. After the Revolution, by the treaty of peace, England relinquished all claim to the territory of the Kennebec Valley, and the United States Congress recognized as valid the claim of the new state of Massachusetts

to those lands. In 1790 that state was divided into three districts, the northernmost of which was called the District of Maine, and by that title Maine was afterwards known until she became a separate state in 1820.

It was the charter of William and Mary which confirmed the land titles issued by William Bradford and his Plymouth Colony, for by including the Plymouth holdings in the new charter to the Province of Massachusetts, the sovereigns recognized the Plymouth rights. In 1661 the Plymouth Colony sold for 4000 pounds their entire rights in the Kennebec lands. The buyers were Antipas Boies, Edward Twing, Thomas Brattle, and John Winslow. This was the famous Kennebec Purchase, from which the present titles of Kennebec lands directly descend.

When present, long-established land owners in Central Maine say that their deeds come down from the Plymouth Company they are quite right, but perhaps some of those present owners are not aware that Plymouth Company means something different from the old Plymouth Colony. For nearly a hundred years the four proprietors of the Kennebec Purchase—Boies, Twing, Brattle and Winslow—made no efficient attempt to settle their lands. Some of the historians have considered them negligent and interested only in their holdings as valuable for fishing and for trade with the Indians. In view of the known facts, such criticism seems unfair. Most of that century of the proprietors' inactivity was unsettled in more ways than one. In the very year of the Kennebec Purchase, 1661, Iroquois raiding parties carried death and disaster to Canadian settlements along the St. Lawrence, and one party penetrated to the Kennebec, where they surprised an Abnaki village and massacred all the inhabitants. Fourteen years later, in 1675, began King Philip's war, the first of many wide-spread Indian uprisings against the English. When most of the Indian tribes became allies of the French, English settlers were driven out of the Kennebec Valley. Through the entire first half of the eighteenth century, settlement was exceedingly hazardous. The Kennebec proprietors should not be blamed because few families settled on their lands before the Treaty of Paris ended the conflict between France and England for control of America.

Why did most of the Indian tribes, including the peaceful Norridgewocks, support the French against the English? One

reason was that the French had never made armed attack on their Indian subjects, but held their loyalty by what the historian Kingsbury calls "flattery, charity and religious ceremonials." The truth is that the English explorers, traders and settlers never understood the Indian psychology as did the French missionaries. We have already seen how little the Englishmen comprehended the Indian concept of the ownership of land. They had as little regard for Indian social customs. They made no attempt to understand what made the Red Man tick. Kingsbury accounts for it thus: "Puritanism was a failure with the Indians. It neither converted them nor attracted them; it was too metaphysical for their comprehension; they preferred their Manitous and medicine men. On the contrary, Jesuit Catholicism, with its symbols and gilded images, displayed by disciplined and enthusiastic priests of unselfish lives, impressed the Indians strongly, and took the place of their own superstitions."

Kingsbury's conclusion that here was a clash of two religions, with victory for the one that used objective symbols, is hardly borne out by the facts. The attempt to win the support of the Indian tribes was not a conflict between Quebec priests and Boston ministers. The Protestant religion had very little to do with it. The Boston theocracy showed very little interest in the natives far away in the Kennebec Valley. The conflict was rather waged by trained religious leaders on one side and eager traders on the other side. Many an Indian chief came to learn that there were honest, fair-dealing Puritan traders. By no means were all of them cheating scoundrels. Occasionally real personal friendship developed between red hunter and white trader. But for the most part the Indian came to know very early in his association with the English that they cared little for him as a person and showed only contempt for his way of life. It was not because the missionary priests tried to convert him to a religion he could understand and adjust to his traditional beliefs that his sympathies turned to the French, but much more because the missionary lived in the Indian villages, ate the Indian food, and actually shared the Indian way of life.

That is how matters stood nearly a hundred years after Boies and his three partners had negotiated the Kennebec Purchase. By that time the Indian wars had all but extinguished the fur trade. The old trading post at Cushnoc (Augusta), which

the Pilgrims had set up within the first decade after their landing at Plymouth, had long been abandoned. Yet there remained the lands, still owned by the heirs of the four purchasers. It was time to encourage settlement. So, in 1753, the General Court (the legislature) of the Province of Massachusetts authorized a corporation to which was given the mouth-filling title, "Proprietors of the Kennebec Purchase from the late colony of New Plymouth." Their claim extended along the coast from Casco Bay to Pemaquid, and inland from the ocean to Caratunk Falls on the Kennebec at Solon.

In order to protect the lands for settlement, the proprietors persuaded the provincial governor to authorize the building of a fort at Taconnet, while they agreed to build one themselves at Cushnoc. In the summer of 1754 Governor Shirley came to the junction of the Kennebec and the Sebasticook with 800 soldiers, and there laid the cornerstone of Fort Halifax, the first guarded ground north of Richmond. Since the head of navigation was at Cushnoc Falls, any supplies intended for Fort Halifax had to be unloaded at Cushnoc and transferred to smaller boats for the last eighteen miles up the river. Hence the company decided to build a protected place for the storage of such supplies. That place was Fort Western. As it turned out, neither fort was needed for protection against the Indians; already the decimated tribes were withdrawing to Canada. Neither fort was ever attacked, and in less than ten years the French and Indian war was over.

From 1749 to 1816 the proprietors of the Kennebec Purchase, popularly called the Plymouth Company, made strenuous efforts to induce settlement. They offered a free grant to each family, besides provisions for the first winter, with the only condition that the settler should clear five acres and build a small house within three years. Larger tracts, some of them consisting of whole townships, were granted under the condition that one hundred persons should settle within three years.

As their chief manager, the proprietors employed one of the shrewdest promoters of the Kennebec lands, Dr. Sylvester Gardiner. He spent much of his own money to induce settlement. He built a large sloop, which kept up constant summer runs between Boston and the Kennebec. He erected houses and mills at what is now Dresden Village; he built sawmills, gristmills, a fulling mill, a wharf and stores at Gardnerstown; he cleared farms and

built houses at Lyndes' Island, Swan Island, Pittston and Winslow; and he furnished free supplies to many settlers. In spite of his tireless efforts, the records of the company show that lands were settled slowly and that nearly everyone who received a large grant failed to comply with the conditions.

Just before the Revolution prospects were bright. As early as 1771, settlers had become sufficiently numerous for the Massachusetts legislature to incorporate four towns. On the same day, April 26, 1771, Hallowell, Winthrop, Vassalboro and Winslow were made incorporated communities. But the Revolution itself brought a set-back to extended settlement. Many of the settlers were Loyalists, who simply abandoned their lands and fled to Canada. Because there was long doubt about who really owned those abandoned lands, prospective new settlers were suspicious about company deeds. There was plenty of trouble with squatters, who became especially powerful in organized opposition at Jefferson. In 1816 the company was dissolved, after dividing certain lands among the proprietors and selling the rest at auction in Boston.

We cannot dismiss this matter of Central Maine land titles without reference to Dr. John McKechnie. He was one of those men of varied talents who meant so much to many pioneer communities. He was an educated physician, a civil engineer, a land surveyor, and a shrewd business entrepreneur. Born in Scotland, McKechnie came to this country in 1755. He landed in Boston, and how he chanced to come to Maine we do not know. We do know that he married Mary North at Pemaquid in 1760 and in the following year was doing surveys for the Plymouth Company. Apparently he lived for a time at Bowdoinham, for he is named as a selectman of that town in the record of a settlement between Bowdoinham and Topsham in 1764.

Dr. McKechnie came to Winslow in 1771. Choosing to settle permanently on the Waterville side of the river, he built a log cabin on the east bank of the Messalonskee stream, and proceeded to erect the community's first sawmill, at what is now the site of the pumping station of the Kennebec Water District. He was the only man with medical knowledge anywhere near Fort Halifax when Arnold's expedition stopped there in 1775, and he administered treatment to the sick and injured for several days. He seems to have practiced medicine very irregularly and un-

professionally, preferring to devote his time to surveying and to business enterprises.

Although Dr. McKechnie ran surveys as far down the river as Merrymeeting Bay and as far up as Skowhegan, it was his detailed and carefully mapped survey of both sides of the Kennebec for some distance both north and south of Ticonic Falls that makes his name memorable in any consideration of the land titles. The old deeds of land in Revolutionary times, along that section of the river, invariably refer to "a plan made by John McKechnie surveyor dated October 1770."

Since John McKechnie was Waterville's most prominent citizen before the Revolution and one of its half dozen most prominent until 1800, it is interesting to note who at the turn of the century owned some of those lots which the doctor had surveyed in what is now the city of Waterville. Two central lots 104 and 105, including now nearly all of the business section of Main Street and extending back a mile from the Kennebec, were owned by Dr. Obadiah Williams, the town's first full-time physician, and by Isaac Temple. Lot 106, on part of which the Elmwood Hotel now stands, was the property of John Tozier; 107 belonged to the town's first "squire," Timothy Boutelle, and 108 to the man who was to become Waterville's wealthiest early citizen, Nathaniel Gilman. Farther up the river were the lots of James Stackpole and Reuben Kidder. Down river from Dr. Williams' lot 104 was the choice lot which the shrewd surveyor had reserved for himself, Lot 103, noting that it included the water power both at Ticonic Falls and at the first falls of the Messalonskee. Below McKechnie's land, three lots (100 to 102) were the property of John Cool, a soldier of the Revolution.

Time and again the McKechnie plan of 1770 has been upheld in the Maine courts. One of the most persistent and most spectacular attempts to overthrow it occurred in one of the central Maine towns during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. One lot owner claimed that one line of his lot was wrong—that the survey line there did not run true. Hence he moved the line fence. The neighbor moved it back again. This was repeated eleven times over a period of more than twenty years. The man who claimed the survey was wrong took his case to court six times, and six times he was defeated. In one instance the parties resorted to violence, and the feud was discussed in the columns

of Maine's newspapers for week after week. But the McKechnie survey held good. Although the plaintiff is alleged to have spent more than \$15,000 in legal fees in his persistent attempt to secure land that would have brought only a few hundred dollars in the 1870's, he got not a single square foot of it.

That is the story of the Kennebec land titles. The King of England, the Council for New England, William Bradford and his Colony of New Plymouth, the Kennebec Purchase, and finally the rights of individual settlers confirmed by the unimpeachable survey of Dr. John McKechnie. If a man's deed referred to that old McKechnie plan of 1770, he had a sound claim. He, his neighbors, and the courts knew without question whose was that land.

Chapter IV

NOSE TO THE GRINDSTONE

THE golden age is always in the past. We constantly long for the good old days that are gone. There is plenty of evidence that those old days, in all their simplicity and their freedom from ulcers, were not so good and certainly not so golden. My grandmother used to tell about her early married days on a farm at the foot of Pleasant Mountain in West Bridgton. She was annoyed to see the lush meadow hay ripen and brown to a crisp. As grandmother told it, she would admonish grandfather: "Fred, you've just got to cut that medder hay." Without anger, but with determination, Grandfather would reply: "I ain't cuttin' no medder hay when I can go out and git a dollar a day and my dinner."

Money was seldom seen on the early Maine farms, whether in northern Cumberland or on the Kennebec. Barter was the way of life. No huge dairy company sent checks for the farmer's milk and cream; no cannery contracted for his corn and beans before the seed went into the ground; no benevolent government paid him for not raising pigs. What he couldn't produce on the farm he traded for at the general store, and he invariably paid in grain and potatoes, butter and cheese, beef and pork, apples and cider. When he bought additions to his live stock—cows, horses, oxen, swine, and poultry—he usually negotiated a swap, and if he had to "pay boot" he would give his note.

In 1788 the selectmen of Norridgewock recorded: "There is not seven pounds in money in the whole town of Norridgewock." The poverty of that community in terms of ready cash is emphasized by our knowledge that in 1788 Norridgewock had more than four hundred inhabitants. In 1790 the town voted that "wheat, rye, corn, peas, flax, wool, and clear pork well salted, shall be received in payment of all town taxes." In 1804 the town of Athens voted that "corn, rye and wheat shall be the

currency to pay the taxes of the town." It must have been with bold optimism rather than confident assurance that the people of Canaan voted in 1793 to ask the Reverend Calef to settle with them for two years, for which they agreed to pay him a total of £120, "payable £30 every six months, the first and third payment in cash, the second and fourth in produce at current traffic prices."

We talk a great deal about the low price of many commodities a century and more ago. Indeed many articles were cheap, as following chapter on the old country stores will show. But there were times when prices were outrageously high because currency was so badly devaluated. That is what happened soon after the Revolution. At Augusta in 1789, writing paper sold for eight cents a sheet, shoes for \$15 a pair, tea for \$20 a pound, molasses for \$16 a gallon, coffee for \$3 a pound, salt for \$45 a bushel. Butter, which you could buy for 15 cents a pound in 1802, was \$1.50 a pound in 1789. Hay, usually bringing not more than eight to ten dollars a ton, was \$200. Good West Indies rum was priced at \$26 a gallon.

The reason for those abnormal prices was that the Continental paper currency was rated at 40 to 1—forty dollars in currency were worth only one dollar in silver. Silver and gold coins—hard money—were extremely scarce. The paper money became worth less and less. Years later Abraham Lincoln used to tell a story about two steamboats that met on the Mississippi. The north bound boat, low on fuel, hailed the south bound boat, loaded high with cord wood. Yelled the north bound captain, "I need some wood. How'll you trade?" "What you got for money?", shouted back the other skipper. "Continentials," cried the first captain, meaning continental paper currency. "All right," yelled the skipper with the wood, "I'll trade you, cord for cord."

Some of the hardships of pioneer days in the Kennebec Valley are revealed in the experiences of the early settlers of Fairfield. In 1848, when Elihu Bowerman, one of Fairfield's first settlers, was a very old man, he was induced to put into writing his memories of the early days. It is a valuable document, not only in its information about one Maine town, but also in its picture of social conditions in the backwoods more than a hundred and fifty years ago.

In 1782, Bowerman and his two brothers came to the wilderness which is now the town of Fairfield. Some time in 1777, the Bowerman boys' father, a soldier of the Revolution, became very ill in his army camp and was sent home for rest and recovery. At the same time the soldier's mother, living in the family home with the soldier's wife and children, became mortally sick. Within two weeks Elihu's father and grandmother were both dead, leaving Elihu's mother with nine children, the oldest only fourteen years. That oldest was Elihu, on whom fell the responsibility of male head of the family. For six years he stayed in the Massachusetts home, faithfully working to help his mother keep the family together.

For some time Elihu had heard neighbors talk about migrating to the District of Maine, but none of them had yet done so when, in 1782, Elihu reached his twentieth birthday. He had recently married, and his bride shared his desire to seek out a new home in Maine. So, in the spring of that year, Elihu and his young wife came to Fort Halifax. Only 28 years had passed since that protection against French and Indian raids had been built, but already there were numerous settlers on both sides of the river, and on the west side a business center had already begun to develop. Near that center, on the Waterville side of the river, Elihu hired a room in a private family, where his wife could lodge while he and his brothers struck farther up the river into the wilderness.

Elihu's manuscript tells us that, after he had paid his wife's room rent, the total capital of the Bowerman brothers was one New England shilling. That didn't faze the three young men, because almost no one else had any cash. To a place on Martin Stream in what is now North Fairfield they made their way and established their claim. They felled trees, cleared a little land, and prepared to build a cabin in the fall. It was a warm summer, and a rude lean-to was sufficient shelter for three rugged men.

Meanwhile they had to eat, and their only resources of food were by hunting and fishing or by working out for one or another of the older settlers down the river. During that first summer Elihu and his brothers worked out about two-thirds of the time, taking their pay in provisions and a few furnishings for the prospective cabin. They also made arrangements with Remington Hobbie, a leading citizen of Vassalboro, to raise a few

potatoes on his farm. Mr. Hobbie allowed the brothers to store their potatoes in his cellar, but the early winter was so severe that before January every tuber had frozen. Before the snows came, however, the Bowermans had put up a log house, roofing it with bark and also using bark for a floor, simply laying strips of it over the bare ground. The cabin windows had no glass and the wind entered at many a crack, but there was plenty of wood for a constant fire and strong arms to wield the axe. The place was now ready for a woman, and Elihu's wife left her Waterville boarding place and became mistress in her own home far from any other neighbor, away up Martin Stream.

Had a woman been writing the memoir, we might learn about the articles of furniture which Mrs. Bowerman had in that cabin home. Elihu, being a mere man, wrote only: "We were not without furniture, but all of it made only four loads on a hand sled." As for food, Mrs. Bowerman was hardly settled before news came of the frozen potatoes. "Our provisions," wrote Elihu, "were all gone and we had nothing left to barter for more."

Then occurred one of those instances so common in Maine pioneer communities. Elihu found his Good Samaritan. In the early New England settlements no one suffered severe want if the neighbors heard about it. Says Elihu, "I met a man in Winslow who would let me have corn and wait for his pay until spring." Could that man have been one of the Simpson family? We like to think so, because a third of a century later it was Deacon Simpson who literally saved the Kennebec Valley settlements after the "Year of No Summer." In 1815 the Valley saw frost every month in the year. Snow fell in every month except July. The corn crop was ruined. Not only did the people spend a hungry winter, but in order to keep alive they had to eat the precious seed corn. In the spring of 1816 there was no seed to plant a new crop. But Deacon Simpson had seed still left from the crop of 1814. By canoe, on horseback, on foot, people came from many miles to the Simpson farm. If they had any money they paid it; if they had anything to barter they traded it; if they had nothing at all they did not depart empty-handed. Everyone got a little corn; the yellow seeds again went into the clearings of the Kennebec Valley, and life in the settlements went on.

It was, at any rate, a Winslow man like Deacon Simpson of 1816 whom Elihu Bowerman encountered in 1783. Not only did

he get a whole winter's credit for corn but also for 25 pounds of pork and a quantity of smoked herring. With such provisions they were able to mix even a few of the frozen potatoes. They had to carry their corn 17 miles on their backs to get it ground, then carry the meal 17 miles back again. Their only bread for sixteen months was made by mixing a little corn meal with frozen potatoes, then baking the mixture over an open fire into a poor apology for johnnycake. Before winter came, there had been no opportunity to plant a garden, even on another's land. Hence for those first sixteen months Mrs. Bowerman saw no vegetable except the frozen potatoes. As Elihu puts it, "We had no garden sass of any kind."

Because the mother back in Massachusetts was not well, it was decided that one of the brothers should spend the winter with her. So with the help of only one of his brothers, Elihu hauled 700 feet of boards on hand sleds, several miles from a sawmill to the cabin. They put some of the boards on the roof in the parts where it leaked worst through the bark, and then laid the rest of the boards on the floor. Mrs. Bowerman agreed that, though in plenty of places the old bark floor was still uncovered, by walking on the boards she could keep her feet a lot warmer than they were before. When Elihu tells us that they "laid" the boards, he means just that. They could not nail them down, because just as they had no window glass, they had no nails. At the corners and other joints the logs had been pinned together by wooden pegs.

All winter their only beverage other than water was box-berry tea without milk or sugar. How they must have relished the coming of maple sugar time. "That spring," says Elihu, "we made plenty of sap sugar, which was the first sugar of any kind on our table." Elihu proudly asserted that, although it was a hard winter, not once did he wish himself back in Massachusetts, nor did his wife make a single complaint. "It was a hard life," said Elihu, "but we were not discouraged."

In spite of Bowerman's assurance that his wife never complained, she had reason to be disturbed more than once. The pioneer life was hard on a woman, and not the least of her hardships was loneliness. Elihu's wife had not seen another woman for six months when in March she decided it was time to pay a visit to a new neighbor who had settled a mile and a half distant.

So Mrs. Bowerman put on her snowshoes, walked through the woods over the still deep snow, paid a nice long call of six hours, and returned home in fine spirits. She was now ready for spring.

When the snow had melted and the trees were in bud, the Bowermans acquired two cows, so that milk and butter were now added to the sugar supplied by the maple trees. There were no fenced pasture, with the result that Elihu chased those "critters" many miles through the woods during that first summer, often going barefoot, though now a grown man. In spite of cow chasing, Elihu and his brother found plenty of time to get grain into the ground. They had cleared two pieces of land, on which they sowed rye, planted corn, potatoes and beans. "In the fall," says the memoir, "we had plenty of rye and corn meal, some potatoes and other sass, with milk, butter, and maple sweet as much as we could desire."

Elihu could not forget that, as eldest son, he had peculiar obligation to the widowed mother. Leaving his wife and the farm in his brother's care, Elihu made the long journey to Massachusetts, where he found his mother in poor health and in straitened financial circumstances. He persuaded her to sell the Massachusetts property and to come to live with him in the Maine wilderness. The old home brought \$700, of which the mother got her legal third, and the rest was divided among the nine children. That figures out at about \$65 for each son and daughter—not a stake of great wealth for future enterprises.

For many years Elihu's mother had been accustomed to live in a frame house in the midst of near neighbors. When she got her first sight of her son's Fairfield dwelling she expressed her surprise and disappointment. Unlike her uncomplaining daughter-in-law, she told her son the place looked more like a cow shed than a house. But after a few months, when all except two of her nine children had come to Fairfield and three of them besides Elihu had put up their own homes near by, old Mrs. Bowerman became content. She accepted the wilderness and the rude log cabin, for it brought her family together again. As Elihu put it, with a biblical flourish typical of his time, "Mother felt like Joseph meeting with his brothers in the land of Goshen." By 1785, when his sister Waite married Benjamin Swift and settled only two miles away, all Elihu's brothers and sisters, except one sister who had recently died, were now married and in their

own cabins between Elihu's house and neighbor Swift's. Thus the widowed mother, within a dozen years after her husband's death, had opportunity to visit regularly with her children, and she kept up those regular visits until her death at the age of ninety-five.

When Elihu came to Winslow in 1782 with his bride, it was not the first time he had been to the Kennebec. Two years earlier he had come to the region, looking for cheap and likely land. During that summer of 1780 he had worked for John Taber at Vassalboro. That was how Elihu Bowerman became a staunch, life-long Quaker. Taber persuaded young Bowerman, then only eighteen, to attend Friends meetings at the home of Charles Jackson, who lived just below the landing at Getchell's Corner. At that time no other member of the Bowerman family was a Quaker, but Elihu was impressed by the simplicity, sincerity and dignity of the faith. Elihu got his chance, two years later, to settle in the region through the kindly help of the Vassalboro Quakers—Jackson, Taber, and most of all the leader of the group, Remington Hobbie. Those outstanding members of the Society of Friends helped the Bowermans get their land and unquestionably aided them through the first, most difficult years. The Bowermans became resolute Quakers and established the active and influential Friends meeting at North Fairfield. Even today, a hundred and seventy years after Elihu first came to the Martin Stream, a clean white meeting house stands on the hill at Black's Mills, marking the still active influence of the Society of Friends.

The Fairfield Quakers were attached to the Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting, and it was no small task to go to Vassalboro for the gatherings. Of this experience Elihu wrote: "Our roads were no better than cow paths, and we had no horses. Men and women had to go on foot to the meetings in Vassalboro, and after the meeting come back on foot to Fairfield, a distance of fourteen miles. I have known our young men, in winter, to take the ox sled, put some of our women on it, and carry them to Vassalboro meeting. They went and came as lively and cheerful as though they had been in a superfine four-wheeled carriage."

After the community obtained horses the trip to Vassalboro was a bit faster, but many years were to elapse before there were any roads fit for carriages. The journey had still to be made over simple trails, but horseback was somewhat better than on foot.

This was long before the day of any bridges across the bigger streams in the Kennebec Valley. When the water was low enough, the traveler forded across the Kennebec and the Sebasticook. When the water was too high for fording, crude rafts were poled or paddled across with horses and people on them. After the Bowermans first settled in Fairfield, twenty years were to elapse before there was any regular ferry north of Augusta. "Sometimes," wrote Elihu, "when the water was half way up a horse's side, a woman would have a man on each side of her to prevent her falling into swift water. I remember that once a man and a woman, riding the same horse, both fell off, but fortunately in shoal water. They returned to shore, wrung out their clothes as best they could, then rode on nine miles to meeting without dry clothing."

Where these travelers usually crossed the Sebasticook there was a narrow ledge with uneven bottom. There the water ran swiftly, and on the lower side of the ledge, where the horse had to go, it was four to five feet deep. This was a dangerous place and saw many a mishap, but through all the years of its use by the Fairfield Quakers none of them was drowned. At their Kennebec crossing, the bottom was covered with small, round rocks—treacherous footing for a horse. Just below Ticonic Falls, near where the boat landing was later built, and where now the lower mills of the Lockwood Company lead to the Water Street houses, the traveler would turn his horse into the river, starting diagonally down stream, then in the middle of the river turn diagonally up stream to a small island, then straight across to the Winslow side. Says Elihu: "We took this route scores of times, often in miserable weather; yet I never heard man or woman speak of the danger or show any fear."

Many are the stories told about the tough hides and iron constitutions our ancestors must have had to endure the long church services in the unheated meeting houses of the early days. In spite of the advantage the Friends had in controlling the length of their own meetings, with no minister to hold a long-winded whip-lash over them, they too shared the spiritual discomforts of their more conforming brethren. Their first meeting house at North Fairfield was an unoccupied house of two rooms. It was so rickety that one day the floor gave way and let the convening Friends down to the ground. Though no one was hurt,

the settlers decided it was time to build a more suitable meeting house. They got together what little money they could. Elihu subscribed six dollars, which he earned by working in the hay field for a Sidney farmer at 75 cents a day. The members cut and hewed the timbers, the Vassalboro Friends supplied nails and glass, and at last the meeting house was ready. For many years it had only loose, backless seats and no heat. Yet it may well be that the inner spirit spoke to those men and women even more readily and more urgently than it speaks to their descendants on cushioned pews in comfortably heated churches.

The Bowermans were a long-lived clan. You will recall that Elihu's mother lived to be 95 years old. Elihu himself lived to the age of 96. On May 24, 1854, this grand old man, with his precious memories of the pioneer days, was fittingly laid to rest in the Quaker cemetery at North Fairfield, beside the uncomplaining bride whom he had brought to the wilderness more than seventy years before.

The Bowermans and their fellow Quakers were not the only Kennebec pioneers who had to keep noses to the grindstone. Down the river at Bowdoinham a day's work was long and hard. In 1825, when Bowdoinham's shipyard was doing good business and paying wages in cash, one would suppose the workers there would have been much better off than the Fairfield Bowermans, who seldom saw any cash at all. But actually the Bowermans, with all their hardships lived a freer life. At Bowdoinham the shipyard took on new hands at 75 cents a day, and the day was from sunrise to sunset. After a year the worker got a dollar a day, and after two years \$1.25, and that was the maximum. In summer the men were called before sunrise and worked an hour before breakfast. At ten o'clock they had lunch of bread and rum. For dinner at noon they took only half an hour. At four in the afternoon came another short break for bread and rum. They quit work at sunset, had supper at eight o'clock and went straight to bed. That was the routine for a six day week. No wonder they called Sunday a day of rest.

At some places down the river the early houses had thatched roofs, a little tighter than the bark used by the Bowermans. At Pittston there was no plaster used before 1800, and then it was applied, not with a trowel, but by using a hoe with cut-off handle. There were very few cellars. Potatoes were kept in large holes

dug on a dry knoll and carefully covered. Although the old up-and-down sawmills came early to the pioneer communities, providing much needed sawed lumber, there was no machinery for fitting it. That had to be done by muscle and manual skill. The lavish molding in some of the old houses attested to the marvelous talent of the early carpenters.

All along the Kennebec many a boy did a man's work. When Peter Heywood and Joseph Weston made the first settlement in Skowhegan in 1772, they built a one-room cabin 20 feet square and managed to cut some hay on land which Indians had cleared, thus getting feed for their few cattle. They had brought 28 head of stock from Massachusetts, but had sold many of them at Vassalboro, on their way up the river, in exchange for corn and potatoes for seed. They managed to get a fair crop, and after the harvest the two men returned to Massachusetts for their families, leaving alone in the wilderness two boys, Eli Weston, aged sixteen, and Isaac Smith, only eleven years old. The boys had to provide their own food, take care of the one remaining cow, and sow the winter rye. They got a little help from John Hale at Sebec (the present Benton) by giving him four days of their joint labor for one of his. But Hale quit after two days, and the boys had to prepare the land and sow the rye alone.

In their rude cabin, seventeen miles from the nearest neighbor, these youngsters spent the winter. Before snow came, they discovered that moose had made off with their precious hay stacks, and they led the cow through the woods to Clinton, where they let her out to Joel Crosby for the milk she would give during the winter. The boys' own anticipation of nourishing milk in the cold months vanished. But the rye was in and they settled down to wait for spring. When Heywood and Weston returned, they found everything in good shape. The rye grew well, the cow was brought back, and the boys were healthy. For many years they proudly told how they planted the first grain ever raised in Skowhegan.

A dozen years later, when Isaac Smith had reached manhood, he was involved in another incident which reveals the hardships of pioneer times. One winter day Smith and Samuel Walton had shot a moose but had been unable to move it. When they returned the next day with two hand sleds, they found the animal fortunately unmolested by carrion prowlers. They cut up

the meat, loaded it on the two sleds and started for home. When they reached the mouth of the Wesserrunsett, after a back-breaking pull through the forest, Smith tried to persuade Walton to come home with him, since the distance to Walton's own dwelling was four miles farther. Walton declined, saying he would at least get his load far enough to be out of the way of Myrick's dogs and then leave it if he had to. By this time it was getting dark and the temperature was far below zero. Walton never reached home. The next day his frozen body was found only a few rods from his house. He had left his sled less than a mile from the spot where he parted from Smith, managed to get across the brook in Skowhegan village, then wandered from the path and finally collapsed with fatigue and cold.

In the old diaries and letters we read much about moose, but little about deer. There is in fact considerable evidence that in the 1950's deer are more plentiful in Maine than they were many years ago. Waterville's distinguished attorney, the late Harvey D. Eaton, who lived in Cornville and used to walk between his home and Coburn Classical Institute over the week-ends in the 1880's once told me that on that thirty mile walk he never saw a deer. Today the automobile driver covering the same route may see half a dozen, and in the hunting season the kill is significant. It is quite possible that deer were as scarce in the 1780's as they were in the 1880's, while moose were abundant. Hanson, in his history of Norridgewock, says: "In 1790 moose were so plentiful that they were killed for the hide and tallow alone. An expert hunter with a sharp knife could remove the hair from a moose skin in fifteen minutes."

Almost as plentiful as moose were the salmon. In her history of Skowhegan, Helen Louise Coburn asserts that there was so much salmon that people got tired of eating it. She says that she once saw a contract made between a farmer and a laborer, wherein the laborer agreed to work in the hay field for fifty cents a day provided that salmon would not be served at more than one meal a day. The annual spring catch of salmon at Ticonic Falls was so large that, in the early part of the nineteenth century many barrels of these salted fish were shipped to Boston. As late as 1830 a ten pound salmon could be purchased in the Waterville market for a quarter.

In the modern day we can scarcely comprehend the difficulties endured by our ancestors to obtain the simplest needs. When the Bowermans carried corn long distances to the mill for grinding, they were doing nothing unusual for their times. For many years after the first settlements at Winslow, Fairfield, Clinton and Skowhegan, the nearest gristmill was at Hallowell. There were only three ways to get corn to that mill—by canoe when the river was open, by hand sled when the trails would permit, or on a man's back.

In the Kennebec Valley most of the early houses were built on hills and ridges, because their cover of hard wood was easier to clear than the big lowland pines. A man and grown boy could fell the trees on five acres in two weeks. Cut in June, the wood could be burned the next spring as soon as it was dry. There was no time to get out stumps. Corn was planted around them and, a year after the first cutting of the trees, the settler had a crop.

Until a sawmill was built in his vicinity, every settler had to live in a log cabin. Much nonsense has been written about log cabins, some writers contending that there were very few such structures in New England anyhow. The truth is that the log cabin was the usual pioneer structure in Maine, and for very good reason. It was important for the settler to build a shelter before winter. He had access to no sawed lumber; he had no boards at all. If he took time to hew out sticks of lumber with axe and adz, he would freeze before he could build his house. The simplest way was to use the logs just as he cut them. He was not ignorant of frame houses. He had probably lived in one. When the buzz of the big up-and-down saw became music to his ears, his log cabin gave way to tight frame house. But even before he built such a house, many a man put up a frame barn. Protection of crops and animals was more important than personal comfort.

The settler was independent and resourceful because he had to be. The earliest cabins were made completely from materials found on the place. There were no nails nor glass, the logs being notched together, and the windows being mere openings with wooden shutters. Even after nails and glass were procured from towns down the river, the chimneys were laid in clay mortar and the rooms were not plastered. Just think of the numerous things which the early settlers got from the forest: house and barn;

furniture, wagons and sleds; axe handles, ox goads, and the handles of all other tools; wooden dishes, tubs and barrels; twig brooms, hemlock tan bark, wild berries, maple sap, birch beer and vinegar, and unlimited quantities of fuel. They made the best of what they had, but to make it do they had to keep nose to the grindstone.

Two customs of the old times kept the boys' as well as men's noses to that grindstone. One of the customs was the father's right to a minor son's wages, the other was the "bound-out" boy or indentured servant. We must not suppose there was anything cruel or heartless about a father's claiming his son's earnings until the latter reached the age of twenty-one. Every father was expected to do it, and he who did not just wasn't raising the boy right. On June 11, 1832, William Bryant of Fairfield sent his son Cyrus to work at planting for Herman Nye, a whole day for 25 cents, and William calmly entered in his account book that Nye owed the quarter to him, not to Cyrus. A year later Bryant sent Cyrus with a yoke of oxen to haul lumber up from the river for Charles Pishon. That was a real job for a boy not quite fifteen. In 1833 the father collected from Isaac Chase fifty cents for two days' haying by Cyrus, and the next year got 25 cents from Thomas Connor, for whom Cyrus did a day's hoeing. When Bryant's younger son Haley was fourteen the father put him to work for four months with Fairfield's foremost lumberman, William Connor, and collected \$26 for Sam's four months' wages. How different are the customs today! When a modern grammar school boy gets his demanded 75 cents an hour for clearing the snow off your walks, it takes a mighty stern father to get any share of it.

The lot of the indentured servant—the bound-out boy—depended almost entirely on the disposition of master and mistress. Sometimes when the master was kind, his wife made life miserable for the boy. More frequently the only thing that made the bound boy's life tolerable, under a stern master, was the protecting kindness of the wife. When both man and woman treated the boy harshly, his life was wretched. No wonder many a bound boy ran away. The old newspapers are filled with notices advertising reward for the return of these runaways. One can imagine the youth's miserable lot when the master got him back. We must not think, however, that all indentured servants were treated

badly. In later years many such boys could testify to the affectionate care in their masters' homes. Some of them were treated exactly like the master's own children; some were even made heirs in the master's will. Often, as the years went by, the one-time bound-boy, now himself a prosperous farmer, would take his wife and children for a friendly visit to the only father he ever knew, the master to whom he had been bound by legal indenture until he was 21 years of age.

Many examples of the old indenture papers are extant. Let us see what they looked like. Here is one, executed in Bowdoinham in 1812. "Hezekiah Allen of Bowdoinham, by these presents doth place his son Peter Allen, a minor under 14 years of age, as a servant to Daniel Pierson, clergyman, the said Peter Allen after the manner of a servant to dwell with and serve the said Daniel Pierson from the day and date hereof until the 20th day of August, 1829, at which time the said Peter Allen, if he shall then be living, will be 21 years of age. During this term the said Peter Allen shall serve his master well and faithfully, shall do him no damage nor wilfully suffer any to be done by others. He shall not waste his master's goods, nor absent himself from his master's service, but shall in all things behave himself as a good and faithful servant ought. And the said Hezekiah Allen is to pay \$40 on demand to the said Daniel Pierson. And the said Daniel Pierson doth on his part promise and covenant to give to the said servant a good and respectable education suitable for a clerk in a merchant's store, if he be capable to learn, and shall provide him good and sufficient meat, drink, clothing, lodging and other necessities fit and convenient for such a servant, and at the expiration of the indenture term shall give to the said servant two suits of wearing apparel, one suitable for the Lord's Day and the other for working days."

All up and down the Kennebec Valley from Merrymeeting Bay to Skowhegan Falls, life at the turn into the nineteenth century was hard. Work days were long, money was scarce, leisure was unknown. The only way a man could stay alive was to keep his nose to the grindstone. It was not only disgraceful to become a pauper; in some communities it was impossible. At Canaan in 1790, every settler deemed likely to become a town charge was warned to depart within fifteen days. Yet, in spite of the hardships, the settlers thrived. They raised large families

and helped the sons clear farms of their own. They were men of honor whose word was their bond. They laid lasting foundations for the prosperity of our valley of the Kennebec.

Chapter V

GITTIN' 'ROUND

THERE is an erroneous impression, held by many folk today, that our New England ancestors "stayed put," as they themselves used to say. They are supposed to have been people who rarely journeyed away from home. The story-tellers are fond of citing incidents of grown men on inland Maine farms who had never been to Portland. Not longer ago than 1936 I heard an aged resident of Central Maine say he had been born nearly 90 years before on the farm he still occupied, that he had once been as far away as Portland, and several times to Augusta.

Such people, however, were the exception rather than the rule. Many of them didn't travel far, but they did "git 'round." It was no mean journey for most of the early settlers to come down into the Central Maine wilderness in the first place. Even with the fair "down" wind that gave rise to the expression "down in Maine," it was a long boat trip from Boston to Augusta, then a tedious ride by longboat to Waterville. From that point the settlers of Ten Lots and North Fairfield, of China and Albion, had an overland hike through the forest.

Yet from the very first the Kennebec settler had his highway. Lady River was sometimes a treacherous, but always an open road. Seldom in a hurry, the settler could wait at flood time for the waters to subside. In winter, the frozen surface, even when patched with snow, was an easier pathway than any forest trail. Small wonder that the McKechnie survey laid out all the lots with a water front. For many years the easiest way to call on a neighbor was by boat.

As time went on and farms were cleared farther and farther back into the country, the settlers needed access to that main highway, the river. Those pioneers could get a pretty good living from the soil provided they could do one thing regularly—get

their corn to a mill. We have seen how Elihu Bowerman used to carry the corn on his back a long seventeen miles, and carry the ground meal back home the same way. A trail that a man could walk was one that could be made passable for a horse and in winter for a hand sled. That is the way our roads came into being.

For centuries the narrow foot trails of the Indians had led, not only along the river, but at many points inland from it. These trails were naturally used by the white settlers. By trimming a few branches here and there, a man could ride the trails on horseback. Unless he traveled alone, it was more often his wife who rode the horse, carrying the youngest child, with perhaps other small children strapped on behind in pillion fashion, while the man and the older children walked. That is the way Reverend Arthur Dinsmore of Anson came to the Kennebec, according to the story he told at his golden wedding in 1854. But he must have heard the story second hand, because he was the baby who was carried in his mother's arms while his father walked ahead, carefully leading the horse. Over these trails the settler carried his grain; over them the first post riders carried the mail; over them jogged the circuit-riding preachers of pioneer days.

We are indebted to William Allen of Norridgewock, who in 1873, when a very old man, wrote his reminiscences of the early days. About the making of roads Mr. Allen wrote: "The first communication by land to a new settlement is usually a spotted line. [He means what modern woodsmen call a blazed trail.] The trees are marked with an axe by hewing off a chip on each side of the trail at such distances that the spots can easily be seen from one tree to another. The underbrush is then removed so that a man can pass on foot with a pack. This work of marking trees and cutting bushes takes a man about two days per mile. Often two or three years go by before there is any further improvement. But there comes a time when the path is widened to permit the passage of a pack horse in summer and a sled in winter. That improvement takes a man four days per mile. The path is then called a sled road and continues with no more improvement for two or three years. Then, by expanding to six days' work to the mile, the community puts in small bridges and causeways, and clears out obstructions so that carts with small

loads can manage to get through, although it is still pretty rough. When the community becomes incorporated as a town, the road is again improved until it is passable for carriages. Twenty years often elapse between the blazing of the trees to make a foot trail and making it available to a carriage."

Mr. Allen assured his readers that the road from Waterville to Norridgewock was built precisely as he had described. It was first a spotted line near the river through Canaan Plantation (Skowhegan), then a sled road for several years. Sixteen years after the first settlers had built their cabins, the road was still not good enough for carts. In 1789 a settler had to carry his potash from Skowhegan Falls to Hallowell by canoe, and he could not go at all when the river was frozen. The road was not good enough even for a sled loaded with heavy barrels of potash. It took twenty years to get a road usable by carts.

For a long time even the largest rivers had to be crossed by the few available fords, just as the North Fairfield Quakers crossed both Kennebec and Sebasticook on their way to Vassalboro Meeting. But very early there was a demand for bridges. Simple crossings on long stringers supported by crossed uprights were long used to span the smaller streams, but more substantial structures, often with stone piers, were demanded for the wider crossings. By 1830 there were several bridges across the Kennebec. Even before the bridges, a few enterprising settlers had established ferries. As early as 1785 one ran from the foot of the Winthrop Road in Augusta to Fort Western across the river. Before 1800 a ferry operated regularly between Getchell's Corner in Vassalboro and the Sidney side. Nearly as early there were two ferries in Fairfield—one called Nobles' Ferry which crossed to the Benton side from a point near Nye's Corner, and another more famous and longer lived ferry, called Pishon's, which crossed near the present site of the Hinckley bridge.

After long controversy between citizens of Augusta and those at Hallowell (both places were then parts of the same town), the Massachusetts legislature granted in 1796 a charter to the proprietors of the Kennebec bridge. Shares were immediately sold and construction was speeded. The pier in the channel was finished in September, 1797, and in early November the bridge was completed amid what the historian Kingsbury calls "great local rejoicing and a corresponding degree of depression

at the Hook" (Hallowell). That Augusta bridge cost \$27,000. Its two spans supported by rounded arches provided the first bridge across the Kennebec river.

The separate town of Waterville came into being because it was so difficult to get across the river to the Winslow side for town meeting and, at first, even for worship. Yet for some unaccountable reason no bridge was built until 1824. Then, in the usual manner, stock was sold and tolls were charged by the private corporation which erected the bridge. That first Waterville bridge lasted only eight years, swept away by the disastrous freshet of 1832.

Earlier than the Waterville, or what has been better known as the Ticonic, bridge are the two spans across the river at Skowhegan. Just as it does today, one span connected the Bloomfield side with the Island, the other ran from the Island to the Milburn side. That bridge is fifteen years older than the Waterville structure, for it was completed in 1809 at a cost of \$4000. Like the other bridges, it was a private, not a public venture. The toll rates charged were fairly typical of all the early bridges on the Kennebec: 37½ cents for a coach, chariot or phaeton, 20 cents for a single horse and chaise or sulky, 25 cents if it was drawn by two horses. By 1830 those rates had been lessened as wheeled vehicles became more common, but in 1809 it was assumed that only the well-to-do had a coach or phaeton. Much more common were the tolls collected for foot passengers at two cents, a rider on horseback 6¼ cents, a single horse drawing a sleigh or sled 12½ cents, each wheelbarrow or hand cart four cents. Sheep and hogs went across at 6¼ cents a dozen.

The corporation owning a bridge usually employed as tollkeeper some man living nearby, or built a house for him if none were to be had. The former was the case with Nahum Totman, whose family was responsible for collecting the tolls at Fairfield in 1848. In that year William Bryant, the Fairfield diarist, recorded: "November 16, 1848. Thanksgiving Day. My wife spent the day at Nahum Totman's and attended at the toll house until I went there and took my dinner." On the other hand, when the Skowhegan bridge was built in 1809, a house was built at the Bloomfield end of the span to accommodate the first tollkeeper, John Weston, who received \$60 a year for his services. A picket fence with a large gate, painted red, was built across the road

opposite the tollhouse. A smart tollkeeper always collected toll before he opened the gate.

Almost all of the early bridges were covered. A few of these covered structures still stand in Maine, but they are fast passing from the scene. Within the past few years several have disappeared, including the famous double-barreled bridge at Stillwater. Still standing is the so-called Artist's Bridge at Newry. A covered bridge still crosses the Piscataquis river between Dover-Foxcroft and Guilford; another spans the Little Black river just before it enters the St. John at Allagash Plantation; another crosses the Kenduskeag Stream in Bangor. Still standing is the Storey Bridge across the Magalloway River in tiny Lincoln Plantation, far up in the northwest corner of Maine, between Rangeley Lakes and the New Hampshire border. I make no attempt to compile a complete list, but cite these few examples as evidence that even in the middle of the twentieth century Maine's covered bridges are not entirely gone.

Toward the end of the previous century those bridges were the rule, rather than the exception. From Sand Hill in Winslow could be seen four long covered bridges, the highway spans across Kennebec and Sebec and the railroad bridges across the same streams. An old photograph of Waterville, taken in 1856 from the Winslow side of the river shows the Ticonic bridge across the Kennebec as a double-barreled structure. At the foot of Sand Hill, suspended over the highway, the photograph shows a sign which reads: "Rail Road Crossing. Look Out for the Engine when the Bell Rings."

Why did the old timers build covered bridges? It was not to add weight in times of high water, as some persons will tell you. It wasn't, as a magazine article recently stated, to keep the bridge free from drifting snow. On the contrary, snow sometimes had to be shoveled on to the bridge to give the sleds traction. The reason for covering a bridge was to protect the timbers from weather, to prevent fast rotting of the wood. That explains why those bridges have so long resisted rain, ice and snow.

Long after the coming of the automobile, anyone who crossed a certain covered bridge could read the warning words: "Walk or Pay Two Dollars." Those are simple words that a second grade schoolboy can understand. Such a child knows the meaning of every one of those five words. But what do they mean when

put together in that sign? Did they mean that you could walk across for nothing but had to pay two dollars to ride? Hardly that. None of the old toll bridges had a fee as high as that. No, the sign was a speed warning. You had to walk your horse across the bridge. If you trotted him across, you were subject to a fine of two dollars.

There are many interesting stories told about the old covered bridges. Squire Bassett of Winslow is said to have married a couple under the roof of the Seabasticook bridge. Adelbert Wright of Waterville relates an even more startling incident about the old covered bridge at New Sharon. At the time of the 1897 freshet, the first automobile ever seen in that vicinity passed over the road from Rome Corner to New Sharon. It was already raining hard, and as the vehicle approached New Sharon the rain froze as it fell, making the traveling increasingly difficult and treacherous. The little horseless carriage crossed the New Sharon bridge and started up the hill beyond it. The grade was so icy that the machine could not make it. So the driver backed down on to the bridge, where the party spent the night, protected by the big wooden cover from the rain and sleet.

When rural free delivery was introduced, many covered bridges were still in use. It became a habit for families living near a bridge to place their RFD boxes inside the structure. A very sensible device to keep the mail dry, it must also have been convenient for the mail carrier, who could take a "breather" under the shelter of the bridge while he distributed the mail.

Even before 1800, when bridges were few, long overland journeys were not unknown. Although the usual transportation for Maine representatives in the Massachusetts legislature was by boat from some coastal port, or even from Hallowell, the sail "up to Boston," against the prevailing wind, was so slow and tedious that more than one representative took the whole journey on horseback. Deacon William Barrows of Hebron made such a trip in 1806. Fifteen years earlier, in 1791, George Warren, Winslow's first lawyer, made the overland journey from Portland to Boston, in order to do business on the way at Saco, York, Kittery, and Exeter. His major business in that 1791 legislature was an unsuccessful petition for authority to conduct a lottery to build a bridge across the Seabasticook.

Perhaps the most notable horseback journey of which we have record was made in 1793 by Hezekiah Prince of Thomaston. Hezekiah was only twenty-two years old and had been in Thomaston only a year when he decided to pay a visit to his many relatives between Maine and Virginia. The common mode of travel between Maine and Chesapeake Bay was by water. But, since several of Hezekiah's relatives lived some distance from the sea, he decided to make the whole journey on horseback.

Hezekiah left Thomaston on November 3, 1793, and fortunately kept a diary of his 1200 mile trip. On his way out of town he stopped to see what he called "the mansion being erected at St. George's river by General Knox." That was the beginning of Knox's famous Montpelier. The first day Hezekiah got as far as Waldoboro, where he spent the night with that "thriving German colony." It took him three days to reach what he calls "Noble's Bridge" in Damariscotta.

Why was Hezekiah's progress so slow? Because in 1793 there were very few roads wide enough for vehicles, and even the foot-trails were slow going for a horse. Unless the rider wanted to be swept off again and again by overhanging branches, he had to keep the pace down to a walk. For much of the traveler's way the old Indian trails, sometimes blazed by spotted trees, provided the only route. Not until four years after our Thomaston man made his journey were wheeled vehicles able to run in such a well populated region as the route between Boston and New Bedford. It was nearly twenty years after Hezekiah's trip before carriages and stages could reach Portland from Boston.

Our traveler crossed the Kennebec and spent a night at Gardiner. "There are sawmills at Cobassy (*sic*)," he wrote, owned by Mr. Gardiner.

They are managed by Benjamin Shaw, at whose house we stopped. In the evening quite a party gathered. We had dancing, singing and games—a lively time, which we enjoyed in spite of our fatigue. The next day he rode up the river to Hallowell in order to hit the well-traveled trail from there to Winthrop. On his way south from Winthrop he gives us a description of the countryside: The farmhouses, mostly built of logs, are sometimes within neighborly distance of each other, but more often several miles apart. Beside cornfield and potato patch the ruddy-faced men and boys hold me for a moment's chat or a word of news. The apple orchards are loaded with fruit, and I have been treated to mug after mug of cider and apple jack.

Bound for Hebron, where he had a sister, Hezekiah crossed the Androscoggin at Bakerstown. Since that is the old name for Poland we might suspect the diarist's sense of geography, were we not reminded that in 1793 Bakerstown included all the land that is now in Poland, Minot and Auburn.

The many graduates of Hebron Academy, which celebrated its 150th anniversary in 1954, will be interested to know what a visitor thought of the town eleven years before Deacon Barrows and Elder John Tripp established the school. When Hezekiah Prince arrived at Hebron in 1793, there were only a few scattered cabins. He spent Thanksgiving with his sister, her husband, and their eight children.

Hebron, wrote Hezekiah, was settled mostly by people from Plymouth County. The town was incorporated last year and was formerly called Shepardstown, from the proprietor, Alexander Shepard of Plymouth. The people here appear to be contented in their forest homes. I much admire the kind, neighborly feeling that exists. They are like one large family. They assist each other in all their heavy work, uniting their labor in husking bees, house building, and clearing the woods. When one farmer kills a cow or hog, the others take parts that can be spared, and the butchering is thus timed for the convenience of the community. Farm hands are paid eight to ten dollars a month, and female help gets fifty cents a week. Spelling schools and singing schools are the indoor sports; the outdoor amusements are gunning parties, sleigh rides and coasting on bobsleds.

Three days out of Hebron brought Hezekiah to Wells, where he says, "A Baptist church under Elder Lord was organized this year." Some of us remember that old church building, erected in 1795 on what is now the road from Wells Beach to Sanford. In 1920 it was still standing, just on the outskirts of the little hamlet known as Wells Depot, but now called High Pine. Some time in the 1920's the old building was burned, and all that the passerby can see today are the rugged stone foundations.

From Wells, Hezekiah pushed on to Dover, Durham, Newmarket and Exeter. He crossed the Merrimac at Haverhill, stopped a night at Wilmington, started at daybreak and made the sixteen miles to Boston in three hours, passing through Woburn, Medford and Charlestown. Hezekiah's cousin James, a United States marshal in Boston, showed the Thomaston youth the sights of the city, for already Boston boasted a population of 20,000. He saw workmen digging away the top of Beacon Hill to make the foundations of Bulfinch's new state house. He was

enthusiastic about the new bridge to Cambridge: "This famous bridge is over 7000 feet long and 40 feet wide. It stands on 180 piers, and when finally completed will cost \$116,000."

The modern visitor to Cambridge sees Craigie House as the home of Henry W. Longfellow. But Craigie House was an old and celebrated mansion before Longfellow ever saw it. After Hezekiah Prince had talked with Harvard's President Willard, he "called on a man named Craigie, who lived in an elegant house surrounded by trees and beautiful shrubs."

From Boston our traveler drove on to Rhode Island, where was his ancestral home. His father and mother, both still living, were delighted to see him and hear fresh news of their many relatives in Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. As he continued south into Connecticut, Hezekiah lost his way in a blinding snowstorm, but finally reached Tracy's Tavern near Plainfield. The next day he visited Fort Griswold, which had been captured by Benedict Arnold for the British in 1782, and where it is alleged Arnold brutally put to death the entire surrendered garrison. Hezekiah angrily recorded in his diary: "Many evidences exist of the blackguard traitor's acts in his murderous plunder and destruction of New London."

Riding from Norwich to New London, Hezekiah passed the little Indian village where dwelt literally the last of the Mohicans, the tiny remnants of that once powerful tribe. Wrote Hezekiah: "Their dwellings are much like those of our own Penobscots at Oldtown. Their famous chief Uncas died about 1690. His remains are buried in a little roadside grave at Norwich."

As we would suspect, the nearer Hezekiah came to New York the better he found the roads. At East Chester he wrote: "I find the roads improved; made 43 miles today quite easy; my horse fresh and active as when I first started." Strangely enough, New York offered slight attraction to our traveller from Maine. He drank a tankard of Dutch ale at Bowery Village, got a glimpse of the "Stuyvesant mansion house," admired the old pear tree which peg-legged Peter had planted, but hastened on across the river by ferry, and arrived at Paterson before dark. Here lived the most prosperous of Hezekiah's brothers, Christopher, who though not yet forty years old, had already retired from his business as a shipmaster.

At Princeton, Hezekiah looked over the famous battle ground. He says not a word about the College of New Jersey, soon to become famous as Princeton University, but he does express surprise at the number of negro slaves in the town. He crossed the Delaware at almost the exact spot where General Knox's band of Marblehead fishermen had put Washington's army across to surprise the Hessians at Trenton. He was greatly intrigued by his first view of a cotton factory. "It is operated by one water wheel, working some seven thousand spindles. It cards, spins and weaves 200 pounds a day, dropping about fifty rolls a minute. The jennies spin 144 threads at once; the looms weave thirty yards a day. All the machinery is so accurately adjusted that any part may be stopped and started again without interfering with other parts."

Life was indeed simpler in those days, and it was not at all difficult for this twenty-two year old lad from Maine to make the acquaintance of the great and the near great. He had already talked with Harvard's president in Cambridge. But greater things awaited him in Philadelphia. There General Knox saw to it that the young man shook hands with President Washington. "I had seen Washington when he was in Boston in 1789," wrote Hezekiah. "He is now, as he was then, tall, superb, slightly corpulent, but straight and dignified. His dress coat was buttoned to the chin, and his buckskin breeches and top boots were a perfect fit. General Knox introduced me to Mr. Bingham, who has just purchased a million acres on the upper Kennebec. He wished me to act as his agent in surveying and settling those lands, but I was obliged to decline." This was the famous Bingham purchase that opened up the Kennebec Valley's great lumbering industry and brought long prosperity to Maine.

Soon after Christmas, Hezekiah was in Baltimore, where he found the harbor frozen and navigation suspended. He crossed the rope ferry and rode through what he called "almost interminable forest" to Blandensburg, with "scarcely any inhabitant along the whole route." And thus he came to the site of our national capital. How strange it seems to us to read, from the pen of a Maine man, a description of the site of Washington as the place looked when there was no city there at all. A few days before Christmas, in Philadelphia, Hezekiah had seen President Washington, General Knox, the other cabinet officers, and the

entire Congress. Then on December 30, this is what he wrote: "We rode today to the place intended for the new Federal City. It is yet nothing but a forest, with here and there a line of felled trees where the streets are to be. A few workmen's shanties stand clustered near the capitol building and the President's house, neither of which has reached above the foundation walls. It is a dismal place, swampy and wet. They intend to call it Washington."

South of Washington, Hezekiah made his first contact with the plantation system. At Bowling Green he dined with a planter who owned a hundred slaves. From Alexandria to Fredericksburg he found "the traveling bad, the people unthrifty, the society in a bad state." But from there on he encountered more fertile soil, large fields of tobacco, and all along the road he saw Negroes rolling barrels of tobacco to market. Hezekiah did not know it, but he was on the famous Tobacco Road.

What was Hezekiah Prince of Thomaston, Maine, doing away down in Virginia? The Princes were a widely dispersed family, and Hezekiah was still visiting close relatives after he crossed the Potomac. His brother Noah, with a wife and two children, lived near Manchester, Virginia. He owned fifteen slaves, all of whom Hezekiah said were "lightly worked, comfortably clothed, well fed, and seemingly happy." Yet Hezekiah found his brother to be one of a growing group of slaveholders who favored emancipation. "The example of the North in liberating their slaves is doing its work," wrote Hezekiah, "and the rest of the states, I am confident will soon set their negroes free." How little Hezekiah knew of what the future held in store. He could not possibly foresee the invention of the cotton gin, changing the whole economy of the South, making slaves extremely valuable and so necessary, in the eyes of the southern planter, that a bitter war must be fought to settle the issue. Hezekiah was not the first nor the last American whose optimism led him to misread the signs of the times.

Hezekiah Prince didn't think much of southern hunting parties. He had heard about those fashionable gentlemen's hunts, and he was eager to try one. He owned a fast horse, was a capital horseman, and all along the St. George river was recognized as a crack shot. But his experience with a southern hunt was not favorable. He doesn't tell us just what was wrong, but limits his

remarks to one sweeping comment: "I joined one of their hunting parties, which cannot for a moment be compared with such sports in the forests of Maine."

It had taken Hezekiah twenty-two days to travel from Thomaston, Maine, to Manchester, Virginia, but he had made several long stops, at times spending as many as three or four days with a brother or sister. After a good long visit with Brother Noah in Manchester, Hezekiah sold his horse and equipment and took boat passage from Richmond to New Bedford, Massachusetts, spent the winter with his parents at Kingston, Rhode Island, and arrived back in Thomaston by boat in the following April, five months after the start of his 1200 miles horse-back ride.

Not many of our early settlers rode so far from home as did Hezekiah Prince. But many of them sailed much farther, even before the days of Maine's great clipper ships. Before Maine became a state, Jim Collins of Vassalboro had traveled to Ohio, Stephen Howard of Sidney had gone to New Orleans, and James Stackpole of Waterville had made several trips to Philadelphia. Maine settlers with relatives in New Hampshire and Massachusetts often exchanged visits. In 1805 at least one Seabasticook boy was attending Brown University, a Winslow boy was at Dartmouth, and a Canaan youth was at Bowdoin. Between 1782 and 1800 Elihu Bowerman made half a dozen trips between Fairfield and Danvers, Massachusetts. Yes, indeed, the early settlers of the Kennebec Valley did "git 'round."

Chapter VI

HERE COMES THE STAGE

“PEOPLE, young and old, would gather on Water and Madison streets for half an hour, sometimes longer. Finally, with all heads turned toward the covered bridge, a shout would go up, ‘Here she comes!’ And the six-horse Concord coach from Waterville would come swinging through the bridge.” Thus wrote Helen Louise Coburn of her own memories of stage-coach days in Skowhegan.

In my own boyhood the Concord coach, as a regular vehicle of transportation between towns, had pretty much disappeared. But I remember one of those old coaches very well. Around the turn of the century, in my native town of Bridgton, Al Burnham, proprietor of the Lake View House, a summer hotel about a mile out of Bridgton Center on the road to Fryeburg, drove an old Concord stage between his hotel and the boat landing on Long Lake, a distance of some three or four miles. Every day during the summer months that stage met the boat that came up from Sebago Lake station, across the big lake, through the serpentine bends of the Songo River with its old wooden locks, across the Bay of Naples into Long Lake, and up that lake to Bridgton and Harrison.

A Waterville resident of 1953, Royal Richardson, used to drive that old Bridgton coach when he was a very young man. Later he drove a buckboard stage between Bridgton and Norway. Al Burnham’s stage had the usual big strap springs, the huge leather brakes, and the inside and outside passenger seats now familiar to patrons of western movies. In those days before the automobile, summer boarders travelled with plenty of baggage. Even the visitors who came for only a fortnight brought trunks. Every trip, Al Burnham’s stage would have trunks and suitcases piled high on the rack at the back. When its four horses pranced

up to the entrance of the old Cumberland House, it was a sight to thrill any barefoot boy.

The Kennebec Valley has had its share of memorable stage lines and noted drivers. As late as the 1890's, Martin Witham drove a stage between Albion and Waterville, his route including Benton Falls, Benton and Fairfield. Even on that comparatively short route, Witham had to change horses in bad weather. Wilbert Cunningham is a well remembered driver of the stage from Norridgewock to Augusta via Oakland. The route came down from Norridgewock through Ten Lots into what was then West Waterville. Thence it followed the Middle Road through Sidney to Augusta. A famous line ran for many years between Skowhegan and The Forks, with Sam Whittier, Irving Young and Charles Colby among its remembered drivers. The stage from Augusta to Norridgewock, in the 1860's, was known as Lunt's Stage, after its famous driver, William Lunt.

The best evidence for the really old stage routes, those of a hundred and fifty years ago, is provided by the annual almanacs of that time. Most prominent of those publications in New England, through all the long years down to the present day, has been the *Farmer's Almanac*, popularly called the Thomas almanac, after its originator. In the Thomas almanacs from 1788 to 1800 there is no mention of stage lines. In 1801, the almanac for the first time lists stage routes out of Boston. It shows no stage going through to Maine; Portsmouth was as near as any Boston stage then got to our state. But in 1806 the almanac lists a line called the Portsmouth Mail routed not only to Portland, but on to Wiscasset. That stage left Boston at 1:00 P. M., stopped over night at Newburyport, and arrived at Portland the following midnight. In 1814 the Eastern Mail is first mentioned. For thirty years this was one of the most important stage lines in the East. It left Hale's stage terminal in Boston every day at 10:00 A. M., arrived in Salem at noon, reached Newburyport at 3:30, Portsmouth at 6:30, stopped the night at Kennebunk, and reached Portland at 8:00 A. M. By 1820, when Maine became a state, the Eastern Mail was operating two daily stages in each direction, one by day, the other by night.

The *Maine Farmer's Almanac*, also known as the Robinson almanac, was first published in 1819. Its first issue listing the stages out of Boston includes the Eastern Mail, but mentions no

other route into or within Maine. From 1820 to 1826 Robinson published no stage list at all. Then in 1827 he included in his almanac what is perhaps the first complete list of stage lines in Maine. The heading reads: "List of stages, the houses where they put up, and the days and hours at which they start from and arrive at Portland." The list names no less than fifteen stage routes out of Portland. Not all of them could have been opened recently; some of them must have been operating for several years. But, because no almanac listed them before 1827, we know only that all fifteen of them were under way in that year. There were two lines to Boston, the Eastern and the Western Mail. There was the Portsmouth Accommodation and the Bath Accommodation. There was the White Mountain Stage and the Saco Stage. There were stages to Alfred and Dover, to Gorham, to Paris, to Waterford, and a short line only to North Yarmouth. Three lines operated between Portland and Hallowell, one via Winthrop, another via Brunswick, and a third on the so-called Middle Route via Lisbon.

Of course the stage lines were dependent upon roads, and it is interesting to note what roads had been built wide enough and sufficiently turnpiked to accommodate the big stage coaches as early as 1827. There were then five principal roads in Maine. First, one could make a continuous road journey from Portland to Eastport, going by way of Brunswick, Bath, Wiscasset, Thomaston, Camden, Belfast, Prospect Ferry, Bucksport, Bluehill, Sullivan, Cherryfield and Machias—pretty much as U. S. Highways 1 and 1A now go. Second was the road from Portland to Bangor, via Brunswick, Topsham, Bowdoinham, Litchfield, Gardiner, Hallowell, Augusta, Vassalboro, China, Albion, Unity, Dixmont and Hampden. A third road is called the Upper Road from Portland to Augusta, via Gray, New Gloucester, Lewiston, Greene, Monmouth and Winthrop. The fourth road led from Augusta to Anson, going up the west side of the Kennebec through Sidney, then through Fairfield, Bloomfield, Old Canaan and Norridgewock to Anson. The only other road listed in 1827 was a road from Bloomfield to Bangor, via Cornville, Athens, Harmony, Dexter, Garland and Corinth.

In 1830 the Thomas almanac began to pay attention to roads east of Portland. It listed one route not mentioned in the Robinson almanac of 1827. It called it the road from "Portland to

Carratwick Falls." This is obviously meant for Carratunk Falls, the old name for Solon village. The route, in view of modern changes, is interesting. Leaving Portland, it led through Westbrook to Gray, then by way of New Gloucester, Minot, Turner, Livermore, Jay and Wilton to Farmington, thence through New Sharon, Mercer and Starks to Norridgewock, and finally up the Kennebec to Anson and Solon. Who today could possibly imagine that people once went from Portland to Solon by way of Farmington?

In 1827, the next stage stop after Vassalboro on the Hallowell to Bangor line was China. But, by 1830, there were two intervening stops, Outlet and Stage Tavern. Outlet was the old name for East Vassalboro, but no one seems to know where Stage Tavern was located, except that it was somewhere between East Vassalboro and China.

After the coming of the railroad, stage routes were multiplied rather than decreased. Nearly every railroad station saw stages drawn up to meet the trains and transport the passengers to points not reached by rail. The *Maine Register* for 1855 made it plain that a passenger leaving the Androscoggin R. R. at Livermore Falls (then its terminus) could there get a stage for Wilton and Farmington, where he could change to another for Strong and Phillips. At Strickland's Ferry stages left for Britton's Mills, Canton, Peru, and Dixfield. The Androscoggin and Kennebec R. R., then connecting Waterville with Portland, announced: "At the several stations connection is made with stages for the several towns north and west of the line." On the Portland and Kennebec R. R., between Augusta and Portland, stages left Augusta for Bangor daily, also for Belfast, for China, for Rockland, for Farmington, for Winthrop, and for Skowhegan.

The 1855 *Maine Register* lists altogether 49 stage lines operating in Maine. A daily stage ran from Bangor to Mattawamkeag, which was getting pretty far into the wilderness for that early day. Three times a week a stage pushed on even farther into the north woods, running from Mattawamkeag to Houlton. Thrice a week a stage ran from Bangor to Greenville via Exeter, Garland, Sangerville, Guilford, Abbot and Monson. Another operated from Bangor to the Katahdin Iron Works. A daily stage ran from Augusta to Belfast, Bath was connected with

Rockland by two daily stages, and one stage a day passed between Rockland and Belfast.

Eastern Maine had a lot of stages in 1855: Aurora to Ellsworth, Aurora to Bangor, the mail stage from Bangor to Eastport and Calais, the mail between Calais and Houlton, and four lines out of Bucksport, going respectively to Deer Isle, Castine, Belfast and Ellsworth. In Western Maine stage routes connected both Limington and Limerick with Buxton Depot. Another line ran from that depot to Ossipee, N. H., another from North Berwick to Alfred, another from Gorham, Maine, to Freedom, N. H., and the famous White Mountain Line ran from Gorham, Maine, to Conway, N. H. via Standish, Hiram and Fryeburg.

Out of Waterville in 1855 operated an important stage line. It was rather pompously called the Waterville and Bangor U. S. Mail, operated by N. D. Pinkham. It boasted two stages a day in each direction, but by different routes. One went via Kendalls Mills (Fairfield), Sebec (Benton), Unity, Troy, Dixmont and Hampden; the other went via Kendalls Mills, Clinton, Burnham, North Troy, North Dixmont and Hampden. Other Waterville stages were Morse and Mitchell's line to Belfast via China and Freedom; a line to Dover via Kendalls Mills, Pishon's Ferry, Clinton, Pittsfield, Detroit, Palmyra and Dexter. Twice a day the stages of D. D. Blunt plied between Waterville and Skowhegan, and several times a week the same line sent a Waterville stage through Skowhegan, Athens, Brighton, Blanchard and Shirley to Moosehead Lake. A daily stage connected Waterville with Norridgewock via Fairfield Center and North Fairfield, and twice a week a stage left Waterville for The Forks, via Skowhegan, East Madison, Solon, Bingham and Moscow.

Just outside of Waterville, on the old county road that passes over the Cedar Bridge beyond the Thayer Hospital, is a large farm house known as the Frye-Davis House. The original structure was built by Winthrop Morrill about 1770. When that house was already a hundred years old, it was called the Half-way House, because it was a regular stop for change of horses, about half way on the stage route from Augusta to Anson. An elderly lady who lived in the Frye-Davis House when Carl Shorey of Oakland was a boy once told Mr. Shorey that in her own girlhood the house was not merely a place to change stage horses, but a real tavern where the stage sometimes stopped over night and

where beds had to be found for a dozen passengers. A similar stage stop a hundred years ago was the old Reed House at Benton Falls. Scattered around the countryside were many others, like the Brown Tavern at Riverside and the Revere House at East Vassalboro.

Frequently the stage lines changed ownership. Record of such a transaction is an old paper signed on September 1, 1833, by which two men of Old Canaan purchased one-eighth interest in the stage line from Skowhegan to Bangor. The document reads: "Hiram Corliss of Bangor this day sells and conveys to Timothy Eastman and Sullivan Holman, both of Canaan, gentlemen, one-eighth part of all the privileges, ownership, interest and benefits in Mail Route No. 23 from Milburn to Bangor after this date; the same having been this day conveyed to him, the said Corliss, by the said Eastman and Holman and Milford Norton of Bangor. And the said Eastman and Holman agree to advance one sixth part of all the property in money now involved in use in said line, and they are to bear hereafter their due proportion of all expenses in improving and maintaining the line, and to be subject to all liabilities and penalties in like manner with said Corliss, in the transportation of the U. S. mail on said route after this date. In testimony whereof we have herewith interchangeably set our hands and seals."

Many interesting yarns are told about the old stage drivers. The famous air-line road from Bangor to Calais ran through rather wild country—indeed it still does. In the 1850's, on that route, encounters with wolves were not uncommon. Though the animals were never known to attack the stages or their horses, they did give passengers plenty of scares. Their howling at night kept many a traveler from drowsing and often startled the horses into a mad run. The encounters were, however, more startling than dangerous. A single shot into a wolf pack would usually send it scattering. Nevertheless the rival stage line from Bangor to Calais via Sullivan and Cherryfield did not hesitate to point out the awful dangers of the air line, and they spread many tall stories about the wolves.

Stories were plentiful also about highway robbers. There is no authentic record that any air-line passenger was ever held up and robbed, but at least twice the stage itself was held up and the mail stolen. One of the air-line drivers was said to be terror-

stricken every time he drove the route at night. On one occasion he had several sacks of mail but no passengers. So he stuffed the mail bags in men's clothing and propped his home-made dummies up on the seats, driving through the night with those silent passengers swaying beside him. He afterwards insisted that at one turn in the road he distinctly saw two highwaymen, who did not molest him because they dared not attack a coach carrying so many men.

One of the robber gangs showed considerable cleverness in making off with mail bags without stopping the stage. The stage would start from Bangor with a bag of mail strapped on top. At Amherst, where horses and driver were changed early in the morning, the bag would appear undisturbed, the new driver would give his receipt for it and drive on. But when the stage reached Calais the bag would be gone. Postal investigators finally discovered that the stage halted at Amherst close to a high board fence, behind which the thief was hidden. He would wait until receipt had been made for the bag, then would reach over the fence, cut the bag's fastenings, seize it, and carry it into the nearby woods. The final apprehension of the wily thief ended the puzzle.

In his *Journal of Maine History*, John Francis Sprague has given us a memorable picture of the drivers. "Those old stage drivers were men of note in the communities. He who could dexterously handle six horses and safely make a scheduled time was a greater personage than the owner of the line. The stage driver was a versatile fellow. He had to know how to replace a thrown horse shoe, make fast a loose tire, repair a broken tug or hold-back, and wire up a weakened axle. He carried a repair kit of hammer, nails, waxed thread, sail needle and rivets, sharing space with a first aid kit of horse liniment, spirits of ammonia, arnica and Mother Sill's Seasick Preventative. In every bar-room, store and post office along his route, the stage driver's appearance was an event. During a political campaign he was in his glory. The village lawyer, the deacon, the doctor, the leading politician, even the solemn-faced parson, would form an interested group around this Prince of the Whip, to garner the latest news, especially incidents and gossip not to be gleaned from the weekly newspapers. Probably the old stage drivers most consequential days as an oracle were during the exciting times of

Kansas and John Brown and the years of the Civil War. He was everyman's daily bulletin."

Almost without exception the stage drivers of sixty to a hundred years ago wore beards. Those facial appendages were wonderful protection against the rigors of a Maine winter. Sam Foster, former Oakland druggist, recalls that, when his father left the stage line to go to work as a conductor on the Somerset Railroad, he shaved off his beard. For several weeks Sam's young sister refused to recognize the man as her father. Sam Foster thinks he knows what happened to the drivers when the stage lines were abandoned. He is sure that many of them, like his own father, went to work for the railroad.

Friends of Dexter Foster used to say that he could do anything with a horse. He never struck one with a whip. He had only to snap the long lash in the air to start his six horses at a gallop. The horses even knew his nervous cough, and would whinny when they heard him approach the stable. Born in Belgrade, near the present site of the Belgrade Lakes Hotel, Dexter Foster became quite a traveler. Before he settled down in Anson and later in Bingham, he made six trips across the country to California, five of them over prairies and mountains, and one across the Isthmus of Panama. He tried his luck at the "diggins" near Sacramento, but his real love was horses. With several different partners he set up livery stables in California, was twice burned out. Five times he returned to Maine, and four times he couldn't resist the urge to go west again. Out there he drove some of the old Wells Fargo stages over routes endangered by rugged mountains, rushing streams, and daring outlaws. Finally determined to stay in Maine, he became a driver for the stage line from Augusta to Bar Harbor.

The old-time stage drivers did all sorts of errands for the householders on their routes. It is obvious that a man driving six horses cannot very well write a note when a farmer yells at him "Bring me a new almanac next trip" or "Git me a bottle of ipicac." Yet stage drivers like Dexter Foster never forgot an errand. They simply had to train their memories. Very often the driver didn't even know the name of the man who wanted something on the next trip, but he knew where the fellow lived and what he looked like. And on the next trip that fellow got the delivery.

In Waterville, at the home of Mrs. Thomas Burleigh, is preserved a string of bells once used on horses that drew the stage from Augusta to Bangor. It is a string of seven bells, each as large as an orange, and each separately toned. In Albion is preserved the big bell which used to be rung to call the stage passengers to dinner at the local tavern.

The Concord coach, which became a common public conveyance all across the nation, was first made by Abbott and Downing of Concord, N. H. One of their old coaches is still on exhibition in the railroad station at Concord. As the Middle West opened up, before the railroads were built and even afterward, there was a big demand for stages. The best known carriage builders west of the Alleghenies were the Studebakers, and they couldn't turn out stage coaches fast enough to meet the demand. So they bought patent rights from Abbott and Downing, with the result that many a stage that rumbled over the flat lands of the prairies was a Concord coach made by the Studebakers.

The coach or diligence, as it was often called in Europe, is a very old public conveyance. The word comes from Kocs in Hungary, where the first enclosed carriage was built some time early in the sixteenth century. By 1570 it had become a common vehicle on English roads. By the time of Addison it was the big vehicle, with seats both inside and out, in which Sir Roger de Coverley took his journeys. How curious and unpredictable is the origin of many a word. The word *coach*, as applied to the trainer of an athletic team, derives from the verb *to coach*, that is to drive a coach, and attests to the difficulty of guiding those vehicles over rough, primitive roads.

The application of the word stage to these public coaches is even more interesting. The original meaning of the word seems to have been a stop, or a stopping place on a journey. Thus the old diaries speak of coming to the second or the third stage of a trip. It was in that sense that the word stage became attached to the theatre, because the traveling theatrical companies of the miracle and mystery plays of the fifteenth century, journeying about in their carts, put on performances at their stopping places or stages. By the common transference that accompanies language growth, stage came to mean not the stopping place, but a leg of any journey between stopping places. From that step it

was easy to apply the word to the vehicle in which the journey was made, when carriages replaced travel on horseback. Thus the stage coach and the theatre stage have the same origin.

Chapter VII

CANALS AND THE IRON HORSE

MY first modest venture into historical research was connected with Maine's only sizeable canal. In 1830 the Cumberland and Oxford Canal was completed, connecting Sebago Lake and Portland. Its cost of \$206,000 was partly met by a lottery authorized by the legislature. That canal made possible easy deliveries to Naples, Bridgton and Harrison.

My father's grocery store at Bridgton Center was a very old business when father took it over. In the 1830's it had been operated by a man named Dixie Stone, whose account books were still preserved. One summer, while going over an old stock book, I encountered a strange occurrence. After the canal was opened, all merchants on the lakes planned to put in a winter's supply of goods before the ice came and thus avoid the heavy tote-team freight over the road from Portland. A common article in every country store was rum. Year after year, the stock book showed five barrels of rum delivered in early November, then from April through October one barrel regularly each month. But in 1837, after the record of one barrel of rum in May, the date of June 5 saw an entry of three barrels of rum, then the customary one barrel in July, August and September.

What caused that unusual June order? It was at least ten years before I ran across a clue. Then I accidentally learned that some kind of Baptist convention was held in that town in June, 1837. Did that invasion of Baptists cause the augmented supply of rum?

Many Maine people are surprised to learn that there was once an elaborate plan for a system of canals in this state. The famous Erie Canal, completed in 1825, started a canal-building craze all over the country. As early as 1826, John Holmes, U. S. Senator from Maine, submitted a resolve in the Senate, instructing the Committee on Roads and Canals to inquire into the ex-

pediency of a survey to unite by canal the waters of the Kennebec and the Androscoggin with Casco Bay, and to join also the Kennebec and the Chaudiere. On June 24, 1826, the *Kennebec Journal* stated in an editorial: "The union of the Kennebec, Penobscot and Chaudiere may be regarded as a national project and may receive national encouragement, if our state legislature shows sufficient spirit, and if they do not, as so often happens, order us to advance backwards in the march of improvement."

Governor Albion K. Parris was an ardent supporter of the canal project. In a message to the legislature in the winter of 1826, he said:

The facility with which some of our large rivers may be rendered boatable to a great distance above tide water challenges us to action. Without great expenditure, the Kennebec can be made navigable to a considerable distance within Somerset County, perhaps even to The Forks. There is already a continued chain of communication, with the exception of two miles, from Bangor through the interior to the waters of the St. John.

In March, 1826, the Committee on Roads and Canals of the national Congress reported favorably on the project to connect the interior of Maine with Canada by a system of canals. The numerous lakes at the Height of Land, where the Chaudiere and the Kennebec approach each other, convinced the committee that they could be connected so as to allow continuous inland navigation from Quebec to the Atlantic. The report said: "The Kennebec is already capable of sloop navigation to Augusta; thence it is navigable for boats to Waterville. From that town it is only fifty miles to the Chaudiere."

Soon a number of canals, large and small, were strenuously advocated by various interests. One was designed to connect Brunswick with Casco Bay, another to join the Androscoggin and the Kennebec at their upper waters, a third to make possible a water route between Gardiner and Winthrop, then go on to the Androscoggin via Wayne Pond and Dead River. Still another project was called the Seeloomuck Sluiceway—a canal to connect Moosehead Lake with the Penobscot, at a point off the northwest angle of the lake, where the river is nearly twelve feet higher than the lake surface. The purpose was to divert timber into the lake and thence to Kennebec waters and thus avoid what the canal advertisements called "the long, difficult and expensive drive" down the Penobscot.

Folks in many small communities also had their dreams of water transportation. China Village, strategically situated on its big lake, developed several schemes, the most feasible of which was designed to connect with the Kennebec at Gardiner. But nothing came of it, and nothing came of more than fifty other projects, including the large ones laid before the Congress in 1826. Neither the Chaudiere and the Kennebec, nor the Kennebec and the Androscoggin, were ever connected by canals. No canal connected Brunswick with Casco Bay, or Bangor with the St. John.

Of the many canal plans only one was carried out—the Cumberland and Oxford, the canal up which came those barrels of rum to Bridgton in 1837. In my boyhood it was always referred to as the Presumpscot Canal, although by that time it was no longer in operation, the Mountain Division of the Maine Central Railroad and its narrow gauge connection to Bridgton having rendered it unnecessary. The lottery, already referred to, raised \$136,000, substantially more than half its cost. It added much to the prosperity of the Sebago-Songo region between 1830 and the time of the Civil War.

For purposes of this book, interest centers on the elaborate plan to provide navigation far up the Kennebec. On March 4, 1828, the U. S. government printed a document which is still preserved in the Colby College Library. It bears the long title: "Letter from the Secretary of War, transmitting a Report of the Surveys of the Kennebec River and of the Contemplated Routes for Canals connecting with the waters of said river." The report showed that, although the head of tide at Augusta marked the end of navigation for sea vessels, which could not pass the Cushnoc Falls, boats could continue up the river to the foot of Ticonic Falls at Waterville, interrupted only by winter ice, violent freshets or extremely low water. Above Augusta the best channel was on the west side, along which extended a tow path where oxen or horses sometimes pulled the longboats. Then the report made reference to a place properly spelled Getchell's, but pronounced in native Maine fashion Gitchell's: "Two miles above Bacon's rips the bed of the river is much occupied by small islands, and since the bottom is easily removed, I recommend a low dam obliquely from the eastern shore to the head of No. 1 Island above Gitchell's (sic) Corner."

Six miles below Waterville is a drop in the river called Six Mile Falls. Here the river descends three and a half feet in less than a mile. The report strongly recommended keeping the channel very close to the western bank so that a tow line could be used when necessary. According to the survey, the exact distance from the Augusta bridge to Ticonic Falls was 18 miles 1470 feet, with a total rise of 36.1 feet.

Admitting that "many of the inhabitants press for a lock and dam system from Augusta to Ticonic Bay," the surveyors nevertheless recommended the removal of obstacles and clearing of the channel rather than the construction of locks. But when they reached Waterville, they encountered a different problem. They concluded that the falls could not be passed except by a short canal and locks. The drop was a sharp nineteen feet. The surveyors still favored a western channel, but were stumped by the profusion of mills that had sprung up on the Waterville side. They recommended, therefore, that a canal be constructed on the eastern side, to extend above the College Rips, by-passing both the falls and the difficult rapids above them.

That would have been quite a canal. It would have started not from the Kennebec, but from the Sebec, several hundred feet above its junction with the larger river. It would have extended about a mile and half (8150 feet) and would have entered the Kennebec at some point opposite the present Maine Central R. R. shops. Two locks were proposed, the stone for which was to be obtained from boulders in the neighboring fields, which could easily be split into regular blocks. The survey pointed out that, if the field supply should be insufficient, granite could be obtained in any quantity at Norridgewock. Apparently in 1828 no one suspected the existence of a quarry site right in Waterville near the County Road.

When the surveyors viewed the many rapids between Waterville and the northern end of Fairfield village (then called Kendalls Mills), they revised their plan. Instead of a mile and half canal, they now proposed one which, had it ever been built, would have been one of the longest in Maine. The report says:

A dam and locks from the Sebec to above the College Rips, as first proposed, will not suffice. It still leaves the situation at Kendalls Mills and many points between uncontrolled. It is better to consider the whole extent of the river from Ticonic Bay to Kendalls Mills as one continued obstacle

to be avoided by one long canal. The water should be taken from the river near a dam already built, which directs the river into Kendall's mill race. The canal should then follow the west shore, entering Ticonic Bay below the lowest mill there. The entire length would be four and a half miles.

Elaborate as was this Waterville canal plan, it was dwarfed by the ambitious Ammonoosuck Canal project, designed to connect the waters of the Androscoggin with those of the Connecticut. The route was to start at Dead River Pond, run through complete wilderness to the Androscoggin river, a distance of about two miles, then up a rise of thirteen feet to Ammonoosuck Pond, the summit pass of the canal line. A dam was to be built at Dead River Pond to raise its level to that of Ammonoosuck, and a canal would connect the two ponds.

Some of the handicaps encountered by early surveying parties are revealed in this old government document of 1828. "We could not accurately ascertain the depth of Ammonoosuck Pond. The utter impracticability of procuring means in a region destitute of inhabitants made it impossible for us even to take soundings. We had no boat nor any tools to construct one, no tent or other shelter for a protracted stay. We had to sleep on birch boughs without protection from the weather."

From Ammonoosuck Pond the canal route was to follow the river of the same name to the Connecticut, a distance of 25 miles. The final word of the surveyors was: "Thus to unite the waters of the Connecticut and the Androscoggin is unquestionably practicable. If it is undertaken, we may expect in a few years to see that uninhabited wilderness filled with a numerous and prosperous population."

Such were the visions of our Maine ancestors for water transportation far from the coast. They dreamed and even planned a time when the Quakers of China could step on a boat at the head of their lake and not leave it until it docked near the place of quarterly meeting in Vassalboro; a time when the Gardiners could leave their ancestral acres by boat and go directly to the Westons' wharf at Skowhegan; when the wilderness of the Dead River region would be well populated, fertile farms sending produce not only down the Androscoggin, but even to the Connecticut. Their dreams were not fulfilled; save for the lone project from Sebago Lake to Portland, the proposed canals were never built. Before any stone in a Waterville field could be split

to be placed in a lock at Ticonic Falls, a mechanical monster had come upon the scene, one so powerful that he made the canals mere forgotten dreams. The ink was scarcely dry on the engineers' drawings when the iron horse came prancing up the valley of the Kennebec.

On the morning of November 27, 1849, the gentry of Waterville, in their frock coats, stove-pipe hats, and flowing black cravats gathered at the tiny new building off Pleasant Street, the town's first railroad depot. Accompanied by their hoop-skirted ladies, they boarded the cars, and the first train ever to be seen in Waterville went down to Readfield to meet the train up from Portland. When the party returned, on that first train ever to go from Portland to Waterville, the entire town was out to meet them. Bells rang, cannon roared, and cheers rent the stinging November air. Banquet tables were set up in the freight house. Every merchant and professional man was invited. Everybody who was anybody was there. Waterville's leading citizen, Squire Timothy Boutelle, led off with a stirring speech, to be followed by oratory straight from the United States Senate, where Waterville's own W. B. S. Moor was one of Maine's two senators. Governor Lot M. Morrill proclaimed it a great and unforgettable day. In the evening the floor was cleared for dancing, and the stately reels mingled with the newly introduced waltz to conclude the celebration. Thus came the Androscoggin and Kennebec Railroad to Central Maine.

The railroad had first come to Portland in 1842, when the Portland, Saco and Portsmouth R. R. was put through from Portsmouth, then the terminus of the Eastern R. R. from Boston. But that line from Kittery to Portland did not carry the first steam train to puff its way in Maine. That honor belongs to Bangor, where in 1836 the Bangor and Piscataquis Canal and R. R. Company operated between Bangor and Oldtown the first steam train in Maine and the second in all New England. That little road maintained uninterrupted operation until 1869. It was taken over in the 1850's by General Samuel Veazie, a famous lumberman, and was thereafter called Veazie's Railroad. This historic road's first train left Bangor on November 6, 1836, in charge of a conductor named Sawyer. The rails were tiny compared with modern standards—12 feet long, 2½ inches wide, and ¾ inch thick. They were spiked to hard pine ties six inches

square. The first engine had wooden wheels except for tires and hubs. The doors of the passenger cars were on the side, and the conductor, when collecting fares, walked along an outside foot-board, as his successors did later on the summer-time trolley cars.

The first stop out of Bangor was at Hogtown, so called because one of the first trains struck a hog owned by a Mrs. Newman who lived there. Unable to secure compensation for the damage, Mrs. Newman tried out the lard from the dead hog and with it greased the rails for a distance of two miles. When the train reached the greased rails, its wheels began to spin and the train came to a stop. Only by repeated applications of dirt, dug up beside the track could the train crew keep the locomotive moving. They were four hours late getting into Oldtown. The usual running time for the twelve miles from Bangor to Oldtown was slow enough—two and a half hours.

That first locomotive on the Bangor and Piscataquis road had no brake on its wheels, only a kind of wagon brake on the tender. The handle was placed on the outside, as on the old stage coaches. The freight cars also were without brakes. They were stopped by pushing a stout stick between the spokes of a wheel and letting it come up against the car sill. Passenger cars had side brakes similar to that on the tender. Trains were always mixed, consisting of four to six cars, of which only one usually carried passengers. The one-way fare was 37½ cents.

Although the Piscataquis was the first steam road actually operated in Maine, it was not the first chartered. That honor goes to a railroad planned for less than a mile between Calais and Milltown. The record of railroads operating in 1850 shows no such road, but does show a railroad, horse operated, between Calais and Baring, a distance of six miles. This was probably the outgrowth of the plan which had received the first railroad charter granted in Maine, for the Calais and Milltown charter was signed on February 10, 1832.

One of the most dramatic stories of Maine railroad building concerns the Grand Trunk, now the Canadian National, from Portland to Montreal. In 1834 a Maine youth, John Alfred Poor, made a boat trip to Boston for the express purpose of seeing an exhibition of a steam engine propelled on rails. In her account of the incident, published in *The First International Railway* (Putnams, 1892), his daughter Laura E. Poor quotes her father

as saying: "After it was placed upon the track, its driver, who came with it from England, stepped upon the platform with almost the air of a juggler or a professor of chemistry, placed his hand upon the lever and with a slight move of it started the engine at a speed worthy of comparison with a rocket, amid the cheers of the multitude. It gave me such a shock that my hair seemed to start from its roots rather than stand on end. From that day the locomotive engine grew into a greatness in my mind that left all created things far behind it as marvels and wonders."

John Alfred Poor had been born in Andover, up above Rumford, in 1808. He taught school at Bethel, then became a lawyer in Bangor, and was 26 years old when he saw the steam locomotive in Boston. He was a big man, standing six feet two inches and weighing 250 pounds, all bone and muscle. Events were to prove him just as big mentally as he was physically. From that day in Boston he had a vision that never left him, the vision of a railroad system that would cover all New England. Early, half-hearted schemes had been suggested to connect Belfast with Quebec or Portland with Lake Champlain. Poor made a thorough study of the region between Portland and Montreal, actually drew plans for a proposed railroad and called it the Atlantic and St. Lawrence. In 1843 he petitioned the Maine legislature for a charter. By that time he had expanded his plan to include an extension from Montreal to Chicago, and another line from Portland to Halifax across the Province of New Brunswick. Hitherto railroads had been considered only as conveniences to old, settled communities. Poor was the first man to plan a railroad for development of a new country.

Just as Poor was getting ready to do business with a group of Montreal business men, who were interested in financing the Canadian end of the proposed road, Boston financiers put up a barrier. They wanted a road from Boston to Montreal and they didn't intend to suffer interference from a little group down in Portland. What were those backwoodsmen thinking of, to try to compete with venerable and civilized Boston? From the Massachusetts legislature a charter was secured by Abbott Lawrence and Harrison Gray Otis for a road to be called the Boston, Concord and Montreal.

Hearing of the plan on February 4, 1845, Poor started immediately by horses and sleigh for Montreal. Leaving Portland

at midnight in a light snow storm, he encountered a raging blizzard outside the city, so that it took him six hours to reach Teak's Tavern in Falmouth. Soon after daylight the storm ceased, but the cold increased to twenty below zero. With a single companion Poor pushed on from Falmouth. Nearly two feet of snow covered the road and in places there were drifts several feet deep. Yet, before dark, the travelers reached the Waterhouse Inn, at Paris. The next day, with landlord Waterhouse breaking a road ahead, they reached Rumford in mid-afternoon, where they were able to hire half a dozen men to ride ahead on horseback and open a horse track to Andover. Beyond that birthplace town of Poor's there was no road or track of any kind—only wilderness, the big north woods. For the forty miles between Andover and Colebrook, Poor had to make tedious progress without road breakers or even a road. He covered only two miles an hour.

The great test came at Dixville Notch. At its entrance, with temperature still twenty below, all Poor could see was "a perpendicular mountain of snow." At Errol four men agreed to help the traveler through the Notch. With snail-like pace, a few feet at a time, they finally got through. It was now the fourth day since Poor had left Portland, and time was precious. Any day the Boston bankers might come to terms with the men in Montreal. So, without stopping to rest, Poor took the road, now broken out, to Sherbrooke, Quebec. He drove all day and all night, changing horses whenever he could, and finally reached Montreal on the morning of Monday, February 10. He was at once informed that the Montreal Board of Trade would meet that very morning at ten o'clock for final decision on the Boston proposal. John Poor had arrived on time. Now everything depended upon his facts and his persuasive powers.

The Portland man made a vigorous appeal. He presented the superiority of Portland harbor, its nearness to Montreal compared with Boston, the easier grades for a railroad line. While the Montreal board deliberated, unexpected assistance came to Poor. William Pitt Preble, just as determined as was Poor to secure the road for Portland, had started for Montreal only a day later than Poor, waiting only for the storm to subside. In fact Preble took advantage of Poor's trail. Suddenly he appeared before the Montreal board, with strong support for the Portland case. He brought with him a handsome charter, replete with

great seal and beautiful script, for the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Railway, granted by the Maine legislature only a few days before.

The Board voted in favor of Portland. Ground was broken on July 4, 1846, but at the end of two years only fifty miles of track had been laid in Maine and only thirty miles in Canada. Early in July 1851, five years after breaking ground, the road entered New Hampshire, not through the Dixville Notch, but by way of Gilead and Shelburne. Late in 1852 it crossed the Connecticut River at North Stratford and reached the Canadian border early in 1853. In July of that year the entire 292 miles were complete and the line was leased to a new company, the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada, on a 999 year contract. Nearly a century later, in 1946, Alvin Harlow wrote in his *Steelways of New England*, "The Atlantic and St. Lawrence Railway still has a corporate existence. Though most of its stock is held outside New England, some of it is still owned by Maine residents who receive that comfortable six per cent every year."

Even before the railroad had reached the Kennebec Valley, excursions by the new mode of transportation were already fashionable in Portland. On July 30, 1843, the *Portland Gazette* reported, "Some hundred or more of our ladies and gentlemen visited Saco last week on a picnic excursion over the new railroad." The greatest railroad excursion out of Portland, in 1843, however, was a trip to Boston for the dedication of Bunker Hill Monument. More than a thousand people made that trip. The passenger cars being insufficient to accommodate the crowd, the riders were transported on open flat cars, along the sides of which crude benches had been placed. The train left Portland at 4:00 A. M. on June 16, and took nine hours to reach Boston.

The editor of the *Portland Gazette*, who was one of the passengers on that excursion, devoted several columns to the story. He told of the big parade along Boston Common, of the famous brass band of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company. He paid tribute to the marching Irish, but said they "couldn't hold a candle to the elaborate display of the Masons, in aprons and full regalia." Apparently the editor was of different political persuasion from the man who was then President of the United States and who rode in the parade, for the *Gazette's* comment was: "The President of the United States excited respectful attention, but nothing more. A few faint cheers were raised, half

a dozen feminine handkerchiefs were waved languidly. It was clear that while the office commanded the people's respect, the man had not their hearts. His presence threw a chill on the occasion. A friend of ours compared Mr. Tyler to an iceberg, casting a freezing influence on all around him."

Despite the lavish space given to the account of his trip to Boston, the editor makes no mention of the only thing of lasting importance that occurred. He tells us that he had sore feet and so decided not to go out to Bunker Hill for the formal exercises of dedication, but to wait and go there more quietly the next day to get a leisurely view of the monument. He says nothing about the dedication program and mentions none of the speakers. In the old pages of the *Portland Gazette* one can therefore read a first-hand account by a man who rode on the new railroad to Boston for a great occasion and yet missed the only thing that schoolboys a hundred years afterward remember about the event—that the dedication oration was delivered by Daniel Webster and has come down to us as one of the half dozen greatest speeches in American history.

The Androscoggin and Kennebec Railroad, whose first train reached Waterville on that historic November day in 1849, did not itself extend to Portland, but connected with the Atlantic and St. Lawrence at Danville Junction. Waterville missed by only a few months the honor of being the first town on the Kennebec to welcome a railroad. In the summer of 1849 the Kennebec and Portland R. R. had extended its line from Brunswick to Bath, so that the famous ship-building town on the lower Kennebec was the first community on the river to welcome the iron horse.

The original charter of the Kennebec and Portland had given it authority to construct a railroad from Portland to Augusta. By 1850, however, the road extended only to Brunswick and Bath. In 1845 the legislature had granted two additional railroad charters affecting the Kennebec Valley. The Androscoggin and Kennebec was to reach Waterville via Lewiston, Winthrop, Readfield and Belgrade, and we have already noted the completion of that line in 1849. Another charter recognized a plan known as the Penobscot and Kennebec, which was to extend from Augusta through Vassalboro and Winslow to Waterville, and thence through Benton, Clinton and Pittsfield to Bangor.

Great rivalry sprang up between Augusta and Waterville to secure the terminus for a railroad. For some reason not fully explained in the early records, the Androscoggin and Kennebec was able to sell its stock first, with the result that the railroad reached Waterville two years before it came to Augusta. It was 1851 before the Kennebec and Portland was able to complete its line to the state capital. It reached Gardiner on November 10, and on the 29th the first train entered Augusta.

As it turned out, the Penobscot and Kennebec never left Augusta, as its charter contemplated. Instead of becoming an extension of the Kennebec and Portland, it became instead an extension of the Androscoggin and Kennebec, pushing its way eastward from Waterville to Bangor between 1853 and 1855. Meanwhile a road called the Somerset and Kennebec extended from Augusta through Waterville to Skowhegan.

The explanation of these variations of route is a part of the story which old timers called "The Battle of the Gauges." When railroads were first constructed in England, their width had been 4 feet 8½ inches, an adaption from the English rural highways, which themselves had from very ancient times been accommodated to the axle length of the Roman chariot, 4 feet 8½ inches. John Poor of the Atlantic and St. Lawrence insisted on a wider gauge of 5 feet 6 inches. When the Androscoggin and Kennebec was planned to join the Atlantic and St. Lawrence at Danville Junction, common sense dictated the same wide gauge. So it turned out that the railroad from Danville Junction to Waterville and from there on to Bangor had a track five feet six inches wide, while the Kennebec and Portland, adopting the width of track used by the railroad already entering Portland from Boston, was only 4 feet 8½ inches.

Waterville, situated on railroads of both widths was in the heat of the battle. In 1852 a spot between Waterville and Fairfield on the wider gauge Androscoggin and Kennebec was called Moor's Battery because Waterville's U. S. Senator, W. B. S. Moor, declared: "We shall plant a battery at Kendalls Mills which will blow the Somerset road to the devil." In 1856 the legislature passed a law providing that passengers between Waterville and Portland were entitled to travel over either route for the same fare. Because the narrower road had advantage of direct connection at Portland with the Boston road of same

width, the wider road ran their passenger trains going east at excessive speed, so as to leave Fairfield before the arrival of the train from Augusta. In 1858, the legislature passed an act ordering connection between the two roads at Fairfield, and authorizing the board of State Railroad Commissioners to regulate times and rates for the connecting roads. The Androscoggin and Kennebec, refusing to comply with the law, saw its superintendent arrested and long litigation ensue.

Meanwhile the energetic John Poor had been trying to have a third rail laid on the roads between Portland and Boston so as to make them available for his Atlantic and St. Lawrence cars as well as for the narrower Kennebec and Portland rolling stock, but the K & P interests were strong enough to persuade the legislature to prohibit third rail construction. It was not until 1870 that the gauge from Waterville to Bangor was changed to 4 feet 8½ inches; a year later the entire Maine Central system was thus consolidated, and by 1880 that width was standard gauge for the entire nation.

Quite as troublesome as the lack of standard gauge was the lack of standard time. In 1885 a Boston paper stated: "The New York Central arranges its timetables according to the Albany meridian, and woe to the Buffalo or Rochester man who regulates his arrival at the depot by the sun in his own sky, as he will then be 12 or 15 minutes behind time." A directory of 1860 gives the following local times as faster than Portland time: Augusta 1 minute, 39 seconds; Waterville 2 minutes, 16 seconds; Bangor 5 minutes, 50 seconds. Even Cape Elizabeth was 13 seconds faster than Portland and Yarmouth was 16 seconds, while Saco was slower by 44 seconds and Boston slower by 3 minutes, 15 seconds. For many years these local times caused confusion to the traveller. Not until 1883 was standard time generally adopted.

Still standing, disintegrating into rust in the yards of the Maine Central at Waterville, are old locomotives of the European and North American Railroad. There the old engines have stood idle for many years. Why have they not long ago been scrapped? Because of the peculiar terms of the lease. In 1882 the Maine Central leased the European and North American for 999 years. That lease required that no European and North American rolling stock should be sold or scrapped. It could be, and some of it

occasionally was leased to other roads. Doubtless the ingenious methods used by Maine Central officials to comply with those terms and still make necessary and practicable changes would fill a book. But apparently the only way they could deal legally with the locomotives was to leave them to rust in the Waterville yards.

The early railroads used wood for fuel, and they had to stop frequently to replenish the supply in the tender. As late as 1882, annual consumption of wood on the Maine Central was 9514 cords. To be sure the railroad used 56,000 tons of coal that year, but nearly 10,000 cords was still a lot of wood. Convenience was not the only dictator of the change; wood was already proving more expensive than coal. While the road paid \$4.94 per ton for coal and \$3.38 per cord for wood, it got 41 miles to a ton of coal and only 26 miles to a cord of wood.

Not all the folks in Maine welcomed the railroads. Their cowcatchers did catch cows, their screaming whistles and hissing steam scared horses, and their rails ran through fertile fields. "God had never intended a man to travel so fast," stated many a preacher as he denounced the iron monster. There was a lot of dissatisfaction also with the service. In 1885 Editor Drew of the *Rural Intelligencer* (Augusta) wrote: "Last Saturday our friends Adams and Morrill of Westbrook sent us by railroad a package containing two large grape vines, one twining honeysuckle, one Chinese wisteria, and a stalk of Egyptian corn. They reached us the following Thursday, very well dried up, having evidently been exposed all the week to wind and sun, with a freight bill for us to pay for the care or want of it, which was taken to kill them."

Scarcely had the Battle of the Gauges subsided, barely had standard time come in, when a railroad phenomenon peculiar to Maine came upon the scene. That story is reserved for the next chapter—the story of how the two-footers picked up the iron horse.

Chapter VIII

THE TWO-FOOTERS

I WISH I could honestly say that the Bridgton and Saco River Railroad once stopped a train to let me get off and pick mayflowers. That is almost what happened—but let me tell the story as it really occurred.

On an April day in 1910, I rode the Mountain Division of the Maine Central from Portland to Bridgton Junction and there boarded the little Bridgton and Saco River narrow gauge train for Bridgton. That day the mixed train of the narrow gauge had a heavy string of freight cars in addition to the passenger coach and baggage car. It couldn't make the steep grade out of Bridgton Junction to Rankin's Mills. So when it puffed to a stop part way up the grade, several of us got off the train. Seeing a profusion of mayflowers on the edge of the woods beside the track, each of us was able to pick a good sized bouquet before the train, on its third attempt, managed to reach the top of the grade. So I still contend it is literally true that, on a regular narrow gauge trip in Maine, I got off the train between stations, picked a bunch of mayflowers and boarded the same train again.

The first narrow gauge engine ever operated in Maine ran over the 24-inch line opened between Farmington and Phillips in 1880 and was called the Sandy River Railroad. The next year saw the opening of the two-foot Bridgton and Saco River over the sixteen miles from Bridgton Junction to Bridgton. A third narrow gauge road, the Wiscasset and Quebec, was constructed from Wiscasset to Albion in 1895 and was extended to Winslow in 1901. That extension was soon abandoned, although the original line continued until 1925.

In 1915 there were five narrow gauge roads operating as public carriers in Maine: the Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes, the Bridgton and Saco River, the Monson, the Kennebec Central,

and the Wiscasset, Waterville and Farmington. The first was a consolidation of no less than thirteen separate charters issued by the legislature between 1879 and 1912. The original was the Sandy River Railroad from Farmington to Strong and Phillips. Then in 1884 the Franklin and Megantic secured a charter from Strong to Kingfield. In 1889 the Phillips and Rangeley was chartered to operate between those two towns. In 1893 the Kingfield and Dead River built a line from Kingfield to Carrabasset, and later under two additional charters, extended its road from Carrabasset to Bigelow and from Kingfield to Alder Stream. The Madrid Railroad, from Phillips to No. 6 Plantation, secured its charter in 1902, to be followed in the next year by the Eustis Railroad from Eustis Junction to Green's Farm. Then in 1906, the Phillips and Rangeley secured a second charter for a line from Rangeley to Marbles. The Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes was itself organized in 1909 as two tiny roads, from Brackett Junction to Littlefield and from Mt. Abram Junction to Mt. Abram. In 1912 it chartered two more lines, Perham Junction to Barrytown and Madrid Village to Log Landing. When the Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes took over the Sandy River, the Franklin and Megantic, the Kingfield and Dead River, and all the little connecting branches, the whole system that had been operated under thirteen different charters became the Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes Railroad.

At one time narrow gauge railroads were not uncommon in the United States. They were of varying widths from two to three and a half feet. Nearly every state had at least one of them. But it was left for Maine to hold the record for the nation with a larger number of steam roads of two foot gauge than any other state. Before the consolidation of the little lines in Franklin County into the Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes system, ten different narrow gauge public carriers operated in Maine: the Sandy River, the Franklin and Megantic, the Phillips and Rangeley, the Kingfield and Dead River, the Madrid, the Eustis, the Bridgton and Saco River, the Monson, the Kennebec Central, and the Wiscasset, Waterville and Farmington. When the first six of these were merged, five narrow gauge lines remained in operation—the four last named and the Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes.

The person who knows the most about Maine's narrow gauge railroads is no old-timer. When I first interviewed him on my radio program in 1949, he was a senior at Waterville High School. As this chapter is being written, he is a junior at Colby College. His name is Brian Alley, and long before 1949 he had accumulated a vast amount of information about the two-footers. His mother is a native of Franklin County, and relatives still live in Strong and Phillips. Before he entered high school, young Alley had begun to collect souvenirs of the abandoned Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes—tickets, report forms, freight bills, train orders and time tables, and even objects from the old cars and locomotives. His most prized item is a photograph of the Old Sandy River engine No. 1, the first locomotive to run on any two-foot railroad in the United States. Another of his pictures shows a freight train pulled by a Franklin and Megantic engine and ending with a Sandy River caboose.

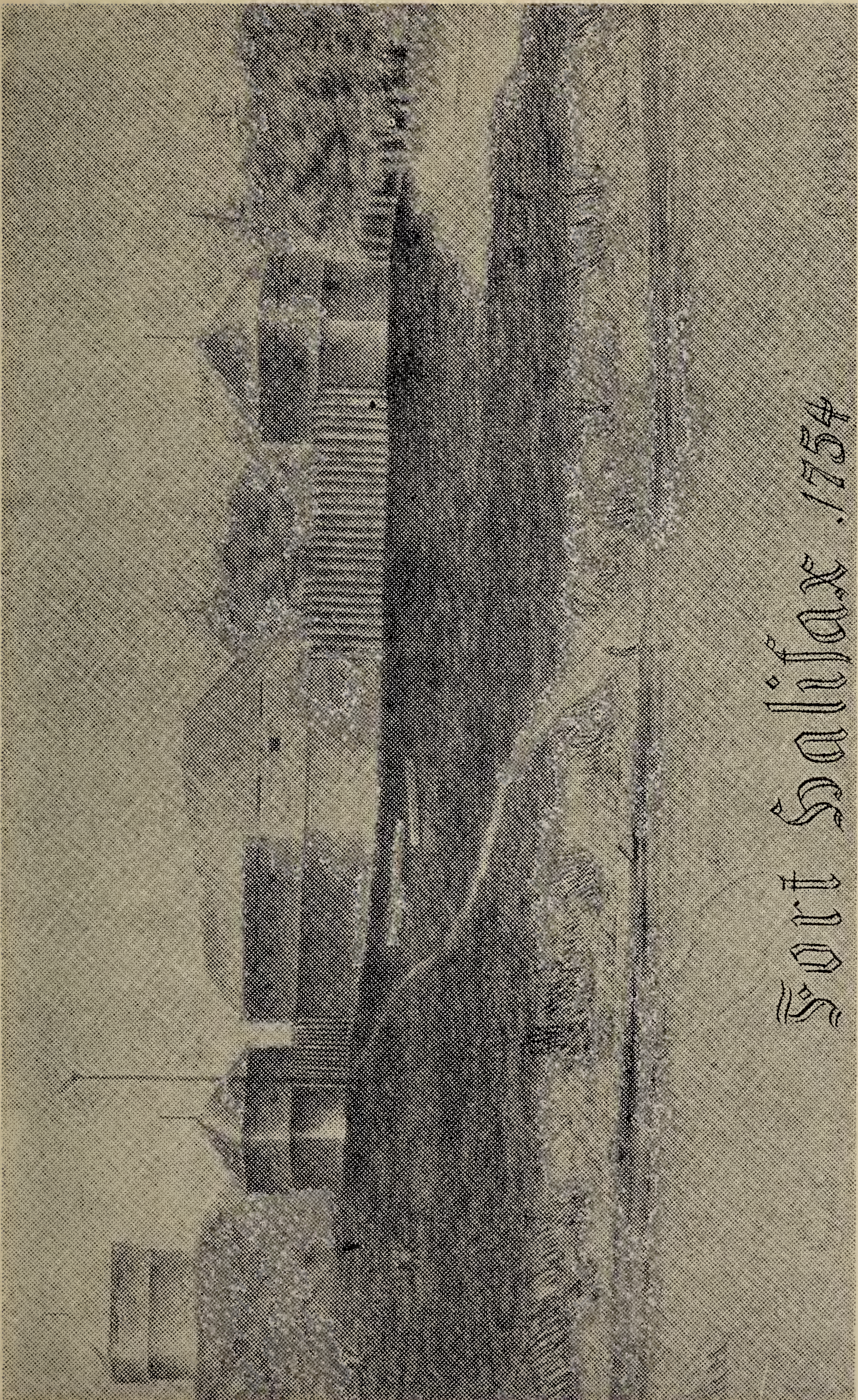
It was Brian Alley who first put me straight concerning the number of narrow gauge roads in Maine. I had heard about narrow gauge roads at Searsport and at Lincoln, and others near certain manufacturing plants. When Brian insisted that there never were but ten narrow gauge lines in the state—the six which made up the Rangeley system and the other four which I have named—I asked him about other roads sometimes mentioned. Brian had an immediate and convincing answer. "Those roads were never common carriers," he said. "A lot of narrow gauge track was laid down by lumber companies and other industries solely for their own work. The short lines at Searsport and Lincoln were only two of a half dozen or more. Real narrow gauge railroads must be limited to those which carry public passengers and freight."

There is a lot of dispute about what should possibly be considered an eleventh narrow gauge road in Maine. A number of my informants insist there was once such a road between Old Orchard and Camp Ellis. It is clear that in the early 1880's a narrow gauge track—there seems to be no record of its width—was laid down on that route. From that point on the dispute begins. One side contends that this narrow gauge operated with horse cars until it was widened to standard gauge. Others insist it had, at first, wood-burning locomotives, changed to coal engines when the track was widened. In 1952 the Biddeford *Jour-*

nal published an old photograph showing a locomotive and open cars, like the old summer-time street cars, of the railroad between Old Orchard and Camp Ellis. Although the picture is obviously of a broad gauge train, the *Journal* stated: "The railroad was narrow gauge at first, and the locomotives burned wood. The track was later changed to standard width, and coal-burning engines were introduced. The line operated only in the summer." If the *Journal* story is correct, here was another narrow gauge, steam railroad in Maine. But, if the wood-burning locomotives actually were not used on the narrow track, but only after it was widened, simply preceding the coal-burners of the same gauge by a few years, and the defenders of a horse-drawn line are right, our list of ten narrow gauge steam lines stands complete.

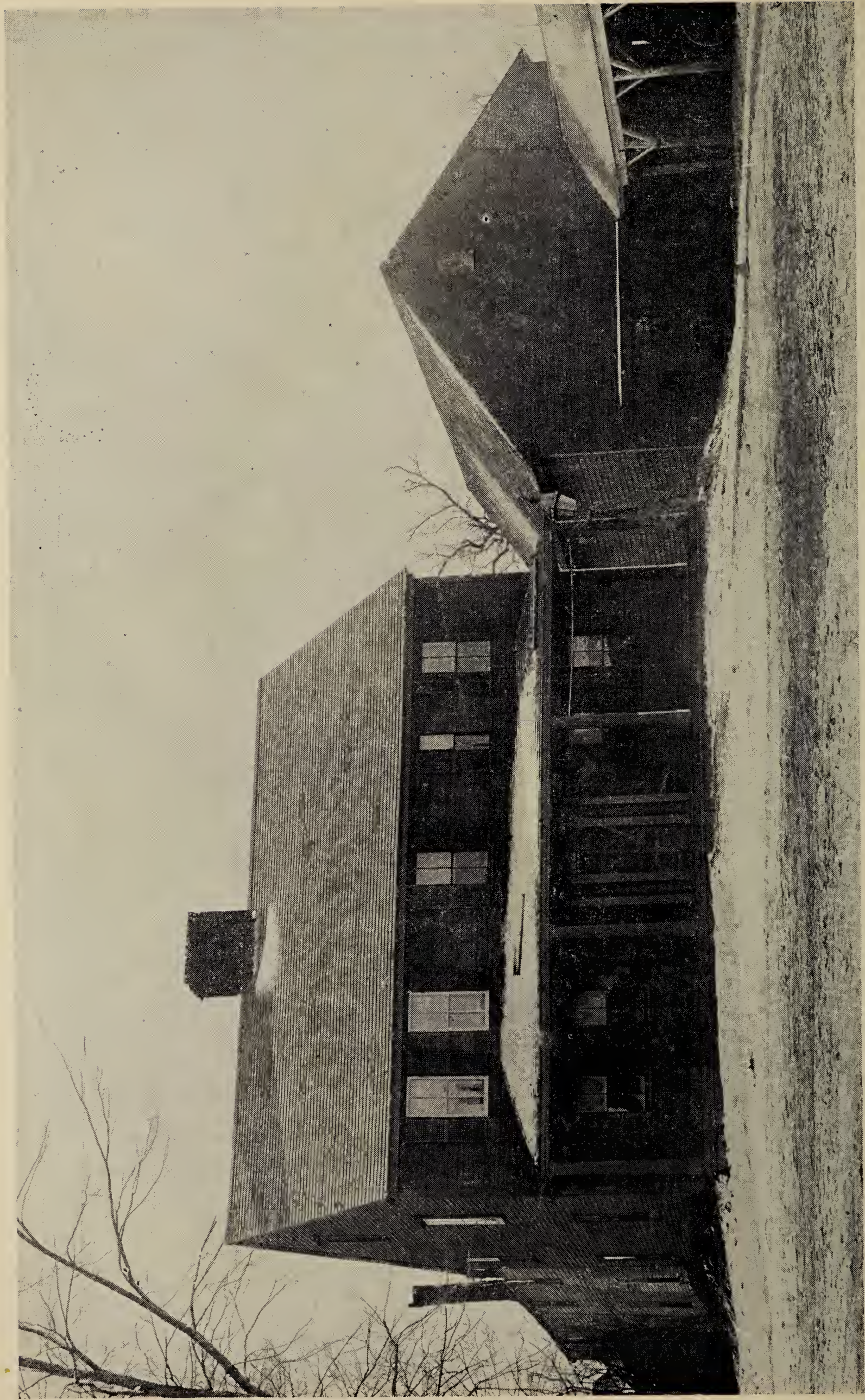
The several narrow gauge roads in Maine had many things in common. They all had to hire crews to transfer freight from the broad gauge cars to their little cars at the junctions. It took quite a gang of shovelers to transfer the cars of coal, and when one of those crews emerged from such a job the man looked as black as a work gang of Southern Negroes. All the roads operated stiff engines, by which is meant locomotives with engine and tender all in one piece, in one stiff unit, rather than two separate units as on the broad gauge lines. Family relationships among employees were not uncommon. The master mechanic of the Phillips and Rangeley, for instance, was a son of the master mechanic on the Bridgton and Saco River.

A lot of good stories are told about the Sandy River Road. One autumn morning, a sweet old lady boarded the narrow gauge at Farmington and asked the conductor to let her know when they reached Madrid. The train was more heavily loaded than usual and had difficulty getting up the steep grades. After much puffing and heaving, it finally reached Redding Siding. The conductor, who had been much concerned about the train's progress, suddenly remembered the old lady. Madrid now lay ten miles back. Hurrying up to the head of the train, the conductor confided his plight to the engineer. The two agreed that the honor of the railroad was at stake. There was nothing to do but back the train the ten miles to Madrid. So the engineer eased the creaking cars back down the line. When they finally were again at Madrid, the conductor entered the passenger car, tapped the old lady on the shoulder, reached for her baggage, and said,



Fort Halifax . 1754

FORT HALIFAX—The beginning of what is now the Waterville-Winslow community. All that remains today is the block house on the right.
Note the unattached block house at the top of Sand Hill.



THE VASSALBORO STAGE TAVERN in 1892.

"Madam, here we are at Madrid." "Oh, no, don't take my suitcase," she cried; "I'm going through to Rangeley. Dr. Nichols told me to be sure to take another pill when I got to Madrid."

I had no sooner told that story on a radio program when a storm of protest arose. I was reminded that not long ago the *Kennebec Journal* had printed the story, only to be called to account by an indignant reader. My own telephone buzzed for days, each caller saying, "Don't you know there never was a Madrid station on the Rangeley line?" I found the *Journal* correspondent had told the editor: "The Berlin Mills Company had a mill on the line between Phillips and Redington at one time. I believe passengers stopped there and drove by team to Madrid. The train left Phillips in exactly the opposite direction from the carriage road to Madrid."

Yet there were residents of Franklin County who still insisted there was once a Madrid Station, but some of the men who worked near the railroad were just as sure that no Madrid Station ever existed. One such man, employed from 1896 to 1899 as a mill and yard foreman for the Redington Lumber Company, naturally travelled on the little railroad many times and was sure he retained vivid recollection of the stations. In substance, he bore out what the *Kennebec Journal* correspondent had stated. "The first stop out of Phillips," says the lumber foreman, "was Reed's Mill in the town of Madrid, where a small mill was located. Four miles beyond was a stop at East Madrid. Eight miles on was Redington, with a big mill, fifteen to twenty families, a large boarding house, and a regular school. After another eight miles came the stop at Dead River. Five miles from there was the end of the line at Rangeley. If passengers wanted to get to Madrid village, they had to get off at Reed's Mill or East Madrid and go into the village by team or a long hike."

Both the lumber foreman and the *Kennebec Journal* correspondent were wrong. There definitely was a Madrid Station, and our proof is an advertisement of the Phillips and Rangeley Railroad, printed in a little newspaper called *Rangeley Lakes*, published at Rangeley in January, 1896. It shows that the first stop out of Phillips was not Reed's Mill, but Madrid—not East Madrid, or any other name, but simply Madrid. The listed stops between Phillips and Rangeley are Madrid, Reed's Mill, Sander's

Mill, Redington Mills, and Dead River. The up-train left Phillips at 2:15 P. M. and reached Madrid at 2:40.

The whole episode shows the fallibility of human memory. Only contemporary written or published records are reliable. The confusion in this case is explained by the fact that Madrid Station was some distance from Madrid village and probably at some time went by a different name. Anyhow, thanks to the advertisement in that 1896 newspaper, the story about the old lady and her pill could be true.

In 1922, a winter of tremendous storms, bitter cold, and a paralyzing coal strike, I spent one long day on that Sandy River line. A good load of forty passengers had left Farmington under a rapidly clouding sky. When some of us changed to the Kingfield train at Strong, it had begun to snow. Before we were two miles out of Strong, the wind had whipped the storm into a blizzard. That little train finally struggled through to Kingfield only seven hours late. And how proud that engine crew were when they learned that the big Maine Central locomotive on the evening train into Farmington couldn't get through until the next morning.

Although I have ridden at least once on all of Maine's narrow gauge roads, it was the Bridgton and Saco River that I knew best. I was born within sound of its whistle, lived as a boy within sight of its passing trains, went to high school where I could look out a window down upon its station and yards. Before I was old enough to be allowed to go alone, an uncle only a few years older than myself was permitted by my ever watchful mother to take me down to the station to see the train come in. With my father I would sometimes ride behind our big white horse, Charlie, down to the freight house, where a hastily needed article would be loaded on to the grocery wagon for transportation to the store, there being no time to wait for the afternoon delivery by Howard Burnham's two-horse "jigger" to all the stores. My own most vivid recollection, when I was old enough to drive the team alone, is that of going repeatedly to the freight house to get bunches of bananas. At the store, it seemed, we were always getting out of bananas.

My father and mother had seen the coming of the railroad to Bridgton before they saw me. The first train steamed into the village just five months before my mother graduated from high

school, on January 21, 1883. My father, already four years a high school graduate, was a five dollar a week clerk in a general store on Bridgton's Main Street. It was five years after the arrival of that first train when these two were married and three years later when I came on the scene. But I have heard Father and Mother both tell about that eventful day in 1883 when the whole town gathered in Depot Square to see the first train come in, and how much it meant to the town. No longer would every precious ton of coal have to be barged up the Oxford Canal and through the lakes; no longer would every pound of wool for the town's three mills have to come over the road by tote-team and every bolt of cloth go out the same way. As Charles Stickney, the local poet laureate put it:

Hark! through the valley o'er hillside and plain
The thunder is heard of the narrow gauge train,
And cheers and huzzas from the spirited throng
Greet the advent of progress now booming along.
Eureka! the shriek of the engine declares,
And "Bridgton Redeemed" is the motto it bears.

The first equipment of that road of my boyhood included two locomotives with 30-inch driving wheels and weighing 15 tons each. Two passenger cars each seated 30 people in two rows of single seats. One car was named Pondicherry (the original name of Bridgton); the other was the Mount Pleasant, for Bridgton's well recognized mountain. The road also boasted a combination baggage and smoker, ten flat cars, five box cars, a caboose, and a snow plow. Construction of the road cost \$166,000 and its original equipment \$26,000 more. At first the road extended only sixteen miles from Bridgton to Bridgton Junction, where it met the Mountain Division of the Maine Central at a point about a mile below Hiram village. In 1898 an extension was built from Bridgton, through North Bridgton, to Harrison. Since I was by that time nearly seven years old, I remember vividly watching the construction of the crossing at Portland Street, where now runs the Roosevelt Highway. But better still, I recall that one of my aunts assumed the awful responsibility by which she and I became two of the 1200 passengers who got a free ride from Bridgton to Harrison and return, when the line was opened on August 3, 1898. I don't remember anything about the speech-making at the Harrison depot. I can't even recall the reputed

flag-raising. But I very distinctly remember how scared I was when cannon salutes burst forth. The published record says a thousand people were fed at banquet tables, but I'm sure I wasn't there.

Perhaps one reason my mother would not let me go to the station unaccompanied when I was a small boy was not so much fear of injury as fear of the company I might get into. When I was eleven years old, the company posted the following notice:

WARNING

For some time past, the officers of the Railroad, passengers and others have been greatly annoyed by the crowd of idlers and loafers who have gathered at the station and grounds of the Company on the arrival of trains. These crowds of loafers have become a nuisance and will not longer be tolerated. People who have business with the railroad or its agents are welcome at all times. Idlers and loafers, however, will be prosecuted.

It did not take long for the narrow gauge roads to acquire nicknames, applicable to the initials of their corporation titles. The Bridgton and Saco River was no exception. It was fondly called the "Bustle and Scoot 'Round," and derisively taunted as the "Busted and Still Running." Unfriendly critics called the Wiscasset, Waterville and Farmington the "Weak, Weary and Feeble," but its best known name was the "Little Wiggler." The Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes was "Slow Ridin' and Rough Landin' " or the "Shaky Rough and Ready Loafer." The Kennebec Central was the "Kickin' Critter."

Most of the time the trains on these little wigglers of Maine's five narrow gauge lines got through in all weathers, just as that one did to Kingfield in the 1922 blizzard. But occasionally they met with trouble. The only railroad wreck in which I ever was involved happened in 1914 on the Bridgton and Saco. No one was hurt, but the passengers had to walk the track two miles into Bridgton Junction. The truth is that when the passenger car left the rails, the train had already slowed down so that the car did not tip over and the passengers only thought its progress seemed slightly rougher than usual.

The Kennebec Central was a two-foot line from the Kennebec River at Randolph to the Soldiers' Home at Togus. Supplies for that Home, now the great Veterans' Hospital and Facility, were then shipped by water, over the Eastern Steamship line, to a wharf on the east side of the river, opposite Gardiner. There

the goods were transferred to the narrow gauge cars and transported over the two-foot track to Togus. This little railroad boasted of a nicely balanced roadbed—an unusual feature, because the equipment of these “little wigglers” was so light that the road builders seldom paid attention to ballast. Before the installation of the electric railway from Gardiner, the narrow gauge had sufficient passenger traffic to require three coaches on every train.

The Kennebec Central went in for ornament and display. The stations were garishly painted and constructed in the lavish gingerbread style of house architecture of the 1880's. Even the roundhouse was an ornamented brick structure, and the locomotives themselves were adorned with heavy brass trimmings. The reason for the unusual display was that the construction of the Kennebec Central was financed chiefly by the federal government. It has always been easier to spend the taxpayer's money than that of a private corporation. Even before the days of astronomical national deficits, the officials in Washington were good spenders. Plans for the Kennebec Central—track, rolling stock, stations, freight sheds, roundhouses, turntables, and shops—were all drawn in the most minute detail. Every gingerbread ornament was put down on a paper plan. The final result was the amusement park appearance of both termini of the road.

Before the Kennebec Central was built, an earlier plan had contemplated reaching Togus by a different route, from Wiscasset instead of from Randolph. Still extant is a printed map, advertising the scheme, which bears the heading, “Map of the Proposed Kennebec and Wiscasset Railroad.” This was to be a two-foot, narrow gauge line from Wiscasset, going through eventually to Quebec. This plan preceded by at least fifteen years the building of the narrow gauge from Wiscasset to Albion, and the map shows it was not intended to go to Albion at all. Its main line was to extend from Wiscasset to Augusta. The line was mapped from Wiscasset up the Sheepscot River through Alna, Head Tide and King's Mills to Turner's Corner, where it swung sharply to the west to Togus and then on to Augusta. A connecting spur also went from King's Mills to Togus, by-passing Turner's Corner. Another short branch was mapped from Turner's to Coopers Mills. At Wiscasset the line was to connect with the

broad gauge road from Woolwich to Rockland, then called the Knox and Lincoln Railroad.

We know, of course, that the proposed Kennebec and Wiscasset was never built. In its place came two narrow gauge roads, the Kennebec Central, and the Wiscasset and Quebec, later called the Wiscasset, Waterville and Farmington. To that latter road, the principal narrow gauge line of the Kennebec region, let us now turn our attention.

From earliest railroad days there sprang up various plans to connect some Maine port with the city of Quebec, just as John Poor had succeeded in connecting Portland with Montreal. As early as 1854 a charter was issued to the Wiscasset and Quebec Railroad, then envisioned as a broad gauge line from the Atlantic, through Maine, to Canada. It was going to have de luxe trains with diners, sleepers and parlor cars. Its promoters felt sure they could take away from the Grand Trunk the million dollar annual grain traffic enjoyed by the road John Poor had built. Wiscasset had a fine harbor and was actually nearer Liverpool than was Portland.

Forty years after that charter-date the first rails were laid, and by this time the plan had been changed to a line of narrow gauge. The plan was still to go through to Canada, but, from the start the company encountered trouble. Its first stretch was intended to reach Burnham, 55 miles from Wiscasset. But the big Maine Central would not let the little fellow cross its Belfast branch. So it was decided to swing west to Weeks Mills, continue to Waterville and Farmington, with the hope of making some kind of deal to use the Sandy River rails from there to Rangeley, then build onward to Quebec. But the Maine Central again boxed the little fellow's ears. The narrow gauge was not permitted to cross the Maine Central tracks at Farmington to connect with the Sandy River. With its name now changed to the Wiscasset, Waterville and Farmington, the road began to deserve its nickname of "Weak, Weary and Feeble," but it did nevertheless become quite a boon to the Sheepscot area, and with its finally constructed line from Wiscasset to Albion lasted until 1925.

In my student days at Colby College, at the close of this century's first decade, the embankment on the Winslow side of the Kennebec, with its stone pier, still stood where the surveyors had intended to bridge the river on the way to Farmington. A bit

farther from the shore stood the little station, with tracks running eastward from it toward the main line of the narrow gauge. By that time no trains ran on the branch into Winslow and soon afterward the tracks were taken up. Folks still spoke of it as the Winslow branch, forgetful of the original, sumptuous plan to make Winslow a station on the main international line from Wiscasset to Kennebec. Franklin County residents tell us that between New Sharon and Farmington can still be seen traces of the construction started for this intended but never completed railroad. The grading of embankments for bridgeheads and culverts, and other signs of preliminary work, are still visible.

Many years ago an Albion woman pasted into a scrap book a long poem, revealing in the style of Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, the bitter controversy stirred up by plans to build this railroad. Should it be broad or narrow gauge? Should it stop at Albion or go through to Burnham? Where would the company get money to build the line? Leaders of opposing forces are referred to as Prophet Crosby and Sachem Wilson. The whole poem is much too long to print here, but a few lines will show the bone of contention.

Prophet Crosby came among you
With a plan for your salvation,
To complete your road to Burnham,
Have two ends and two connections.
Honor be to Prophet Crosby!
He's your friend and always has been.
If he only had the money,
'Nary red of yours he'd call for,
But would straightway build your railroad
Out of love for you, my people.

Sachem Wilson came among you
With a scheme for your damnation,
And I think it runs in this wise:
"If you'll cough up all the interests
That you now have in your railroad,
He will build a broad gauge for you,

Build it up the spout or elsewhere.
Give him ninety days, he tells you,
To collect his game and wampum;
Don't make any further effort
To get your road built into Burnham."

Then in ninety days he'll own you,
 Stocks and bonds and all equipment.
 Verily he is a Daisy—
 Listen not to Sachem Wilson.

We are tired of this talking,
 Tired of the broad gauge stories,
 Tired of the Sachem's wisdom.
 So build your road to Burnham;
 For Albion has done her duty,
 She's a noble, willing worker.
 Wash the war paint from your faces,
 Smoke the calumet together,
 Vote to build your road to Burnham.

The versifiers were not silent after the little road had been built. If they waxed satirical when the controversy was on, they were no less prone to become lyrical after the line became a reality. Charles Crosby of Waterville, a native of Albion, has another old scrap book in which appears a poem of several hundred lines, apparently published serially in some Maine newspaper. The verses make a kind of idyllic ode, singing praise of the little narrow gauge that puffed into Albion. Here are a few of the lines:

On steamer wharf, by calm, smooth bay,
 We jump on board our new railway;
 Up Sheepscot Valley away we go,
 By rocky ways where waters flow.
 Such varied scenes oft tuned the lyre
 Of Walter Scott with a poet's fire.
 By ancient church on the distant hill,
 Through Alna cut, o'er the smiling rill,
 And fair Whitefield, 'mong daisies wild,
 Charming the eye of woman or child.
 At Coopers Mills we tarry long,
 For maidens fair inspire our song.
 On Windsor soil, by shady groves,
 And cooling founts where the squirrel roves,
 Our fiery horse with a smoky tail
 Holds back his prance on the iron rail;

.

Where swelling notes of the Crosby band
 Roll o'er the track on Pigeon Plains,
 For next we stop where Homer reigns,
 A lonesome spot in the wilds of Maine,
 But blooming now with flour and grain.

Now China Lake lies glassed below,
As down the grade we coasting go;
Sorrow and care will not hover o'er
That pure, white church on the pebbly shore.
By Lovejoy Pond with its cooling breeze,
Where balm is found mid evergreen trees,
Our puffing steed runs o'er the rail
By Crosby's house in the pleasant vale.
The waving corn on Albion hills,
The lowing herd by cooling rills,
The leafy trees and the thorny thistle
All hear the sound of Crosby's whistle.

Just like the other narrow gauge roads in Maine, the Wiscasset, Waterville and Farmington built up its legends. Among the stories told is one about a much boasted train that failed to arrive. One spring day a string of freight cars was loaded with bark at Winslow and started for Wiscasset, where the load was to be transferred to a steamer and shipped to the leather factories at Peabody. On the same day, a new schooner was to be launched at Wiscasset. Hence, the passenger cars that always accompanied the freights on those mixed trains, were crowded.

Word came down the line that the "Little Wiggler" really had a load at last. Here was a chance to boom the stock of a line that badly needed money. In every town along the way the chief stockholders turned themselves into salesmen. "Just see what our road can do," they said. "Here is your chance to make money. Buy this stock while it can still be had."

Meanwhile the train proceeded down the line. The engineer and the fireman took turns holding down the whistle cord, and the whole countryside had no trouble hearing the blasts, because the tiny locomotive boasted a standard sized whistle. Constant blowing of that whistle used up so much steam that the crew had to stop the train frequently to get up enough power to move. Rumor has it that the crew were enjoying themselves so much that they forgot to take on water, although they are alleged to have remembered to take plenty of rum. Water or no water, the train finally came to a stop from which no urging would move it.

At Wiscasset a pompous welcoming committee waited in vain. After frantic telegraph inquiries from station to station, the train was located in a wooded area in Alna. The load of bark eventually reached Wiscasset and got on its way to Massachu-

setts, but the angry passengers arrived several hours too late for the launching.

What happened to Maine's narrow gauge railroads? Are they lost forever? The tracks have been taken up, the stations have been torn down or converted to other uses, and in many instances even the roadbed is gone. But happily some of the equipment is still in use, though outside of Maine. In the summer of 1949 I had the pleasure of riding once more in the little passenger car "Pondicherry," in which I had so often ridden as a boy on the Bridgton and Saco. That little car now operates on the Edaville Railroad at Carver, Massachusetts. Ellis Atwood, a cranberry grower at Carver, became an enthusiast for narrow gauge railroads. He was a leading member of a group which gathered once a year to make an excursion on one or another of the old lines. Even after a road had been discontinued, but before its rails were taken up, this band of enthusiasts would find a way to make one last trip over it.

Mr. Atwood conceived the idea of getting rails, rolling stock and other equipment from the abandoned narrow gauge roads in Maine, then laying them down on his own property in Carver to serve two purposes: transportation of materials, workmen, and crops through his cranberry bogs, and an attraction for tourists. After years of negotiation and many set-backs, he finally built five miles of narrow gauge. As a tourist attraction it soon exceeded all expectation. Every year more than 200,000 passengers ride the five mile circuit on that little road. The Edaville rails came from the Bridgton and Saco River, where also Mr. Atwood got two locomotives and several cars. From the Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes he acquired two coaches, a caboose, and the only parlor car ever used on any narrow gauge road in the United States. From the Monson road he got two locomotives. A coach and a snow plow came from the Waterville, Wiscasset and Farmington. Mr. Atwood regretted that his plans were formulated too late for him to acquire the biggest narrow gauge locomotive ever built. That was the Sandy River No. 23, which was scrapped when that road folded up in 1935.

The Edaville winds around the cranberry bogs, where, on the day I visited the place, hundreds of pickers were at work. In spite of there having been no cranberries along the old Bridgton and Saco, my ride brought back fond memories. As we slowed

for little station stops, it was easy to imagine them as Sandy Creek, South Bridgton, and Perley's Mills, and the illusion was heightened when over the terminal station there actually appeared the sign "Bridgton."

The wiseacres said the narrow gauge roads were doomed forever. Not only did Ellis Atwood put one into operation, constructing it from the defunct remains of others, but he made it a financial success. For many of us whose nostalgic memories of the narrow gauge lines cannot be smothered, it is heartening to know that down in Carver, Massachusetts, there still runs a narrow gauge road that carries more passengers every year than did all the "Little Wiggles" of Maine.

Chapter IX

WOODENWARE, WICKS AND YEAST

“ALL right, Will, let’s go through the list. Allspice, ammonia, arnica . . . woodenware, wicks and yeast.” The voice was that of Ed Soule and the time was the summer of 1905. I remember that summer very well. I was especially proud to be a regular employee in the store at two dollars a week, received in cash every Saturday night. To be sure, it was for the summer only; I had to get back to school in the fall.

It was not the first time I had heard Ed Soule read his alphabetized list, but it was the first time I became aware that it was a regular ritual. Ed was a traveling salesman—we called all such men runners, probably a corruption of the word drummers—for a wholesale grocery firm in Portland. Every second Wednesday the year around he called at Father’s store in Bridgton. If there were customers, he waited for a lull, whereupon he and Father would retire to the tiny office at the rear of the store. Father would take out what he called the stock book, in which he had written down the items that were getting low. Reserving some of those for other salesmen, Father would give Ed a substantial order. Perhaps Ed would have some specialty to push that day; perhaps Father would buy but more often he would not, saying, “Let’s wait, Ed, and see how it goes down in Portland.” Finally, after they had exchanged the latest gossip of the trade, Ed would take from an inside pocket a little black book and say, “All right, Will, let’s go through the list.”

Never once did I know the repetition of that list to produce a further sale, but it gave a sort of dignified finality to each fortnightly visit, for big 250 pound Ed Soule always took his leave on those three words “woodenware, wicks and yeast.”

The country store that I knew best was a store at the turn of the century about fifty years ago. It was not a general store

that sold all manner of household and agricultural articles, as well as foods, not the kind of store made famous by the Farwell Brothers at Thorndike or the one resurrected in artificial duplicate by Henry Ford at Sudbury. Our store was a village grocery store that had an interesting side-line of crockery and glassware.

In the days when the store had been owned by one Dixie Stone, a character said to have been as spectacular as his name, it was a general store of the old-time, rural type. When my father and uncle took it over as partners in the late 1880's, all that was left of the non-grocery items was a bedraggled assortment of dry goods and a big case of Carter's thread, the narrow drawers of which were the delight of a small boy. One of my earliest memories of punishment, when I was five or six years old, concerns spilling one of those drawers of thread all over the floor, of course after I had been warned not to touch the case.

How the bolts of cloth disappeared I do not know, but one of my first business ventures was to sell, with Father's consent, the hundreds of spools of all colors of thread and silk that filled that old Carter case. I remember selling it, at bargain prices, a spool or two at a time, then in one rash moment selling the remainder, two or three hundred spools, to the husband of a local dressmaker for two dollars. I afterwards learned that the wife insisted her husband was hopelessly cheated by a twelve year old boy, because the rotting stuff would break faster than she could thread it through a needle.

By the time I was aware of Ed Soule's alphabet reminder, the store stocked nothing except groceries and crockery. No, I forgot something else. We had patent medicines, tooth powders, and toilet articles, afterwards relegated to the drug and variety stores, and now in the 1950's just beginning to appear in the food markets. Swamp Root, Lydia Pinkham's, Father John's, Pink Pills for Pale People, Hill's Cascara, I knew them all. Down in Sandy Creek was an old bachelor who lived alone in a cabin on the edge of the wood. At one time or another I have delivered at his cabin door every nameable patent medicine except Lydia Pinkham's. The old fellow imagined he had every disease in the medical dictionary, and he wanted to try every possible cure. His purpose, if not scientifically sound, was at least legitimate,

not like the fellows who constantly restricted their medicinal purchases to Jamaica ginger.

My father, though a good grocer, really had his heart in the crockery business. He fussed over those dishes with affectionate hands, dusting them, rearranging them, showing them to customers. His manner, when he talked dishes, was so polite and his love of china and glass so manifest that he could exhibit his line of chamber pots to an elderly maiden lady without the slightest embarrassment. I was not so fortunate. We had just got in a line of what were called unbreakable chambers, made of enamel ware. One day a lady on whom I was waiting asked for some article about which I caught the one word "unbreakable." I immediately produced one of those new unbreakables and placed it on the counter before her. She angrily flounced out of the store. Some days later I learned what she wanted was an unbreakable lamp chimney.

Speaking of those chimneys—Labaste was the brand name—I recall vividly my Uncle Jim's attempt to demonstrate one of them to a customer. On this particular occasion he was waiting on a lady from the town's social elite. "Madam," he said, "let me show you our wonderful new lamp chimneys." The lamp chimneys were kept in a big case with glass doors and really made an inviting display. There they were—chimneys for the ordinary kitchen lamps, the bigger chimneys for the parlor lamps and the hanging lamps, and lantern globes of several sizes. Uncle Jim reached up casually and took down a chimney, his eyes still on the customer, as he kept up his animated patter. "This," said he, "is simply unbreakable. Let me show you." And dramatically he dashed the chimney to the floor, where it shattered into a thousand pieces. Uncle Jim had grabbed an ordinary eight cent chimney instead of the fancy Labaste. He never tried that demonstration again.

Admittedly Bridgton is not in the Kennebec Valley. That little village lies at the foot of Pleasant Mountain, a kind of afterthought of the great White Mountain range. What has Bridgton to do with Kennebec yesterdays? Why drag in a country store a hundred miles from the Kennebec? That Bridgton store is very much a part of my own yesterdays, and I am sure it was typical of the stores in the industrial villages all over Maine, including the Kennebec Valley. By 1900 every village which depended

largely upon a factory had developed some specialization in retail trade. The village had outgrown the one general store which sold everything. It now had shoe stores, dry goods stores, drug stores, and grocery stores. Few of the latter sold fresh meat, though most of them carried hams and bacon. Each village usually had its special meat market. So it came about that in most towns like Bridgton, with its three woolen mills, a grocery store sold only groceries plus some long-lived side line, like my father's crockery.

Three things have radically changed these old grocery stores: packaging, chain management and self-service. When I was a student in the Kennebec Valley, when men like Sel Whitcomb and Henry Bonsall were selling groceries in Waterville, the chain store was unknown. Although the founder of the great A & P chain had been born in Augusta, the only chain unit the Valley then knew was an occasional Grand Union store, and that company's business was more commonly done from its wagons that traversed the countryside.

Self-service wasn't encouraged half a century ago. The fellow who tried to help the clerk by waiting on himself was frowned upon, if not actually suspect. Even if the goods were on a counter right under your hand, you told the clerk what you wanted and he got it for you. The wise storekeeper didn't put many goods on open counters; he kept his wares on shelves behind the counters, and except for an open space to put up a customer's order, he covered the counters with closed, glass show-cases.

Although packaging had already appeared before 1900, only those of us who were around at that time can realize how little it was used. The grocer sold almost everything in bulk. Sugar was scooped from either large or small barrels. The latter approximately the size of a flour barrel, contained about 200 pounds, but the former—the kind most grocers used—were oversized barrels containing more than 300 pounds. Lard was scooped into paper trays, or into pails furnished by the customer, from barrels, half barrels, or tubs. Crackers came in barrels, raisins in hundred pound wooden boxes, coffee in burlap bags which the grocer emptied into big bins.

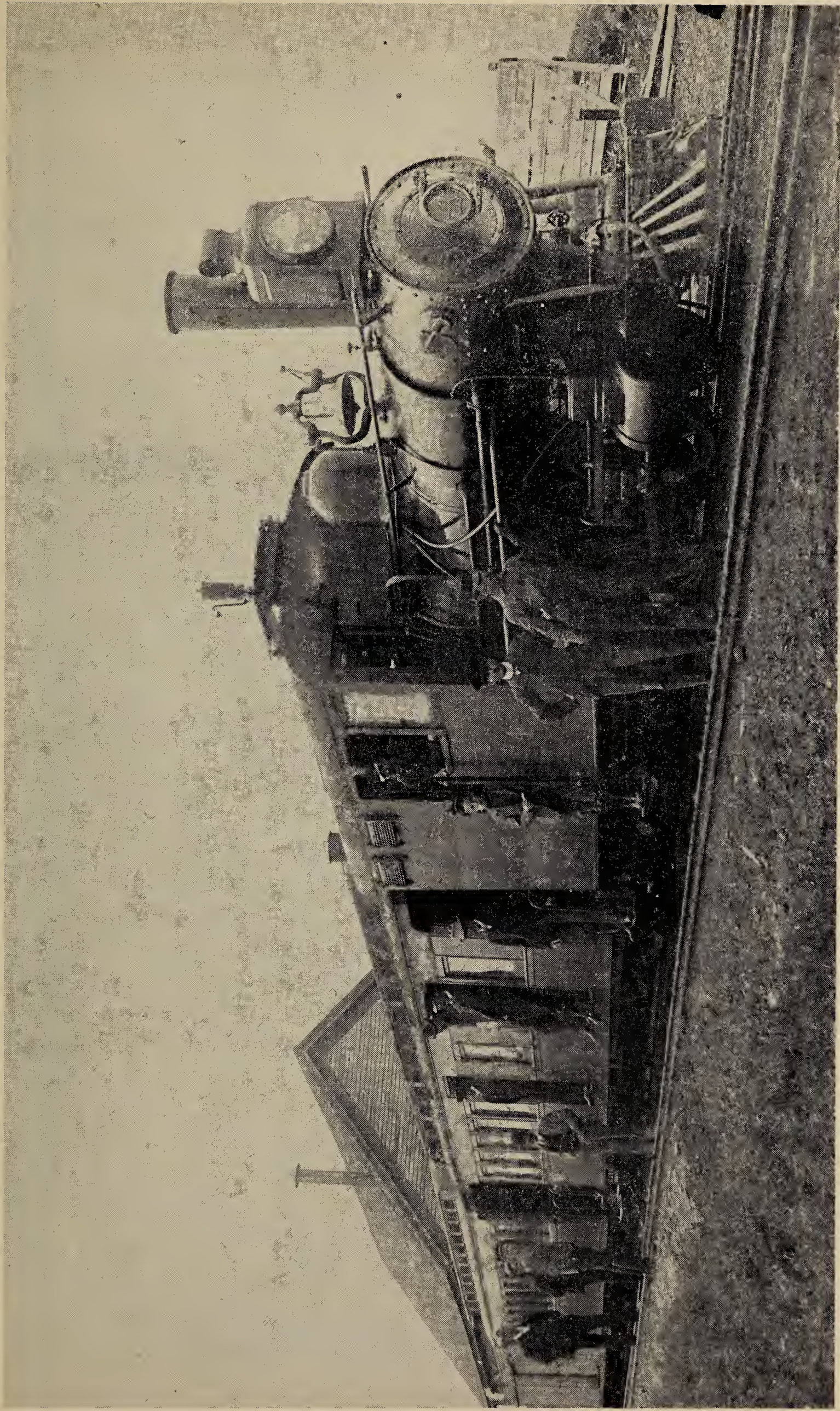
It would be interesting to know what was the first branded, packaged article in Maine groceries. Did the paper package pre-

cede the tin can or vice versa? I think I do know the oldest, comparatively unchanged package in today's grocery stores which was there fifty years ago. It is Arm and Hammer Soda. For a long time it was accompanied by Baker's Cocoa, with the figure of the Puritan housewife on the label, but the manufacturer has changed that label, while the figure of the arm and hammer still decorates the soda package.

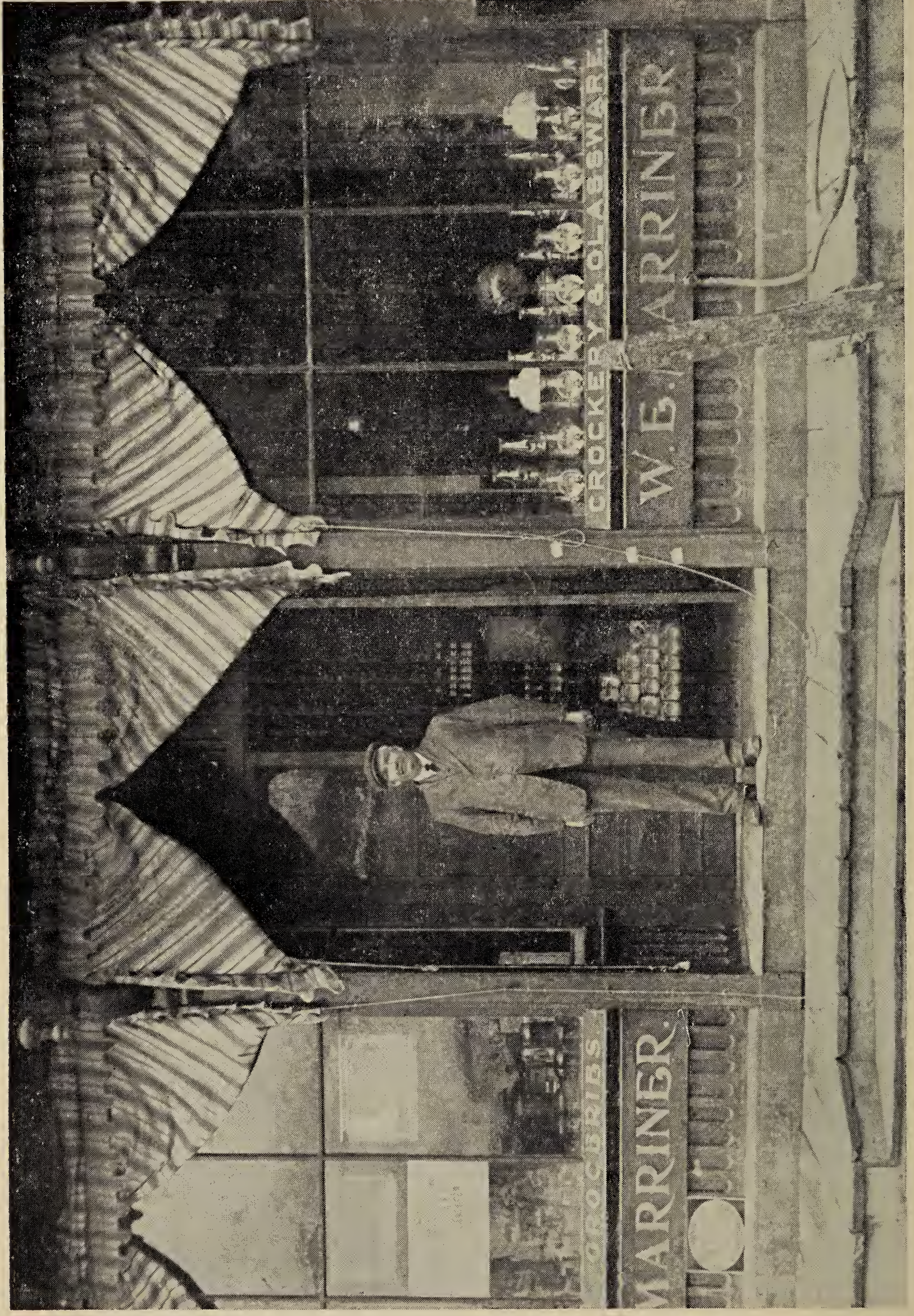
Every grocery store worthy of the name sold many barrels of crackers during the year. Most in demand were the round, double layer, hard baked common crackers, sometimes called chowder crackers. They were packed in neat layers in used flour barrels, with a little flour still clinging to the sides. All through my boyhood they had a uniform price, eight cents a pound. On many a busy Saturday I have seen our one little store in Bridgton dispense two barrels of those crackers, a pound or two at a time.

The only other cracker widely sold in 1900 was the big square soda cracker, which came also in barrels. Being considered somewhat fancier than the common cracker, it was priced at ten cents a pound. The little square saltine had just come into use, but it was deemed a very fancy article at sixteen cents a pound and useful chiefly at parties. A little later came the butter cracker, shaped like the common cracker, but smaller and more tasty. Apparently unusual in the Kennebec Valley, but widely known in Western Maine was the soft baked St. Johnsbury cracker. Some of us never liked it; it was a white-livered, doughy object that never appealed to our crusty taste. A lot of folks, however, preferred them. They came, not only in barrels, but also in big pasteboard cartons, exactly one hundred crackers in each carton. Those cartons arrived at the store in big wooden boxes, four dozen cartons to the box. Those wooden boxes were nearly as large as a piano crate and were in great demand for chicken houses, dog kennels, and children's playhouses.

Sometimes the grocer sold a whole barrel of crackers. The strongest demand was in haying time. On some of the big farms, a barrel of crackers and a barrel of cider, set up side by side in the shade of an apple tree, were considered hay-making necessities. Once in a while some effete farmer would buy a barrel of soda crackers for his haying, but the run-of-the-mill fellows stuck to the big round commons.



THE "LITTLE WIGGLER"—Narrow-gauge train at a way-station between Wiscasset and Albion in 1902.



VILLAGE STORE—The author's father in the doorway of his Bridgton store. Note the display of lamps in the window.

Already, by the turn of the century, families were not so big as they had been in the early days of pioneer settlements along the Kennebec, but there were still households that numbered a dozen or more. No wonder that those who could afford it laid in food supplies in large amounts. Poor indeed was the family that did not buy flour by the barrel. The grocer bought it by the car load, sometimes shipped directly from the mills in Minneapolis or St. Louis. How long has it been since anyone in Maine saw flour in a wooden barrel? Probably very few persons now living ever saw half a barrel of flour in wood. I am not sure the flour mills ever put it up in half size; perhaps local grist mills, all of which handled flour, repacked in the small barrels. Those half barrels, though not common for flour, served for many other commodities, among the most common of which were powdered sugar and corn meal.

As for corn meal, one seldom sees today the old-fashioned bolted meal, prepared in the local grist mills and delivered to the grocers in hundred pound sacks. It was a fine, powdered, yellow meal, quite different from the coarse, granulated meal one now gets in neat packages. The stores of 1900 sold granulated meal out of those half barrels, but for every pound of it they sold a dozen pounds of bolted meal. It was from bolted, not from granulated meal, that housewives made their famous corn meal mush.

The stores did sell flour in less than barrel quantities. In every Maine village were factory workers who could not afford a whole barrel at a time. So the grocer put up plenty of "eighths." These corresponded to the present 25 pound bags of flour purchased at the super-markets, but they scrupulously contained half a pound less. Not one person in twenty can tell you today how many pounds of flour a barrel contained. Its weight was 196 pounds; hence a bag or eighth weighed $24\frac{1}{2}$ pounds. The grocer's problem was to get eight full bags out of a barrel. I doubt if anyone actually accomplished it because there was always some waste. But the dealer had one further source of revenue; he could sell the empty barrel. Much of Maine is apple country and those flour barrels were in constant demand by the apple growers. That was before the day of the standard sized apple barrel, and the flour barrel was regarded as standard enough, in the local market at least.

Symbol of tired muscles for every boy who worked in a grocery store was the big coffee mill. How we used to hate the customer who demanded that the coffee be ground fine; how we loved the fellow who said, "Grind it real coarse." I recall what tricks the clerks in that Bridgton store used to play in order to avoid waiting on a customer from Harrison who used to show up about every three weeks. Not only was his own family addicted to the use of Hustler coffee, a brand that came in five-pound cans; he also prevailed upon his neighbors to buy it. Whether he got a commission we never learned, but every time he showed up we knew it meant an order for five or six of those big five pound cans of Hustler, and they all had to be ground by hand in that cranky old coffee mill before he departed for home. If you think it is fun to grind thirty pounds of coffee, hunt up one of those old mills and try it some time.

Every grocer of those days had his favorite pickle recipe. If I had the ingredients I think I could put up ours today, but I should have to get hold of the whole spices to do it. Not those casually assorted things in one package that are called mixed spices, but the individual items in their pristine form. I would have to use some stick cinnamon, as well as the more pungent cassia buds, whole pepper, mustard seed, turmeric powder, and of course plenty of whole cloves. Packaged ground spices were on the grocer's shelves in 1900, but there were still people who bought the whole spice and ground their own. We had several customers who also insisted on loose cream of tartar, although any chemist could tell them the packaged article was exactly the same. I suppose many a dealer, getting out of loose cream of tartar, simply emptied a pound package into a paper bag, and thus satisfied the fussy customer.

Persons over fifty years of age often remark how young people take for granted many things that did not exist at the turn of the century. Think what they missed, these youngsters who never knew a day without automobiles, airplanes, radios, electric refrigerators and oil burners. Only by the most lively imagination can they understand what is meant by the horse and buggy days.

But it doesn't so easily occur to those who have passed the half-century mark that they too take for granted many things our grandfathers never knew. My father, who was born in 1861,

and who from the age of 18 until shortly before his death at 84 was in the grocery business, could remember when the first yellow bananas came to Maine. For some time the big red bananas had been seen, but before the Civil War no store in inland Maine had ever sold a yellow one. In my grandmother's girlhood, no sane person would eat those new fangled fruits—or were they vegetables?—called love apples. Love apple was the old name for tomato, and to use a bad pun, it took folks a long time to catch up with them.

Oranges have long been common in Maine. My great-grandfather, who drove an ox team between Portland and Gorham in the 1840's, used to include oranges on his load the week before Christmas. But grapefruit is another story. I was well along in grammar school before I saw the first of those eye-squirting missiles. My maternal grandmother, who operated a boarding house for mill workers, insisted that those big, sour balls weren't fit to eat and would have nothing to do with them.

What is the oldest, prepared, ready-to-eat cereal? I think, without question, it is Shredded Wheat, which preceded any of the corn flake varieties by several years. Of the latter one of the best known was Force, advertised through its famed Sunny Jim. Then there were Elijah's Manna, Krinkles, and Flakies. Good old oatmeal had been used for centuries, and by 1900 the Quaker Oats Company was putting it into attractive packages. Then along came Pettijohns, Ralston, and a few others, culminating in Cream of Wheat. But these all had to be cooked. And I suspect some people came to think of them much as old Samuel Johnson, the dictionary maker, thought of oats. Defining that cereal, the crusty lexicographer wrote: "Oats—a grain used in England for horses and in Scotland to support the people." Oatmeal was another commodity that the grocery stores sold in barrels, and those loose oats long competed with the packaged article.

One thing would strike the modern customer as strange indeed: the prejudice which many a grocer of fifty years ago had against cigarettes. My father persisted in that prejudice. All his life he personally never used tobacco. However, in his store he sold plug, twist, fine cut, and cigars—but no cigarettes. Not one of those coffin nails would go out over his counter. By the time when he closed the Bridgton store in 1912 and moved to Massachusetts, cigarette smoking had become common and accepted,

but still no cigarette was ever sold in that store as long as he owned it. Eccentric as those storekeepers like Father seem to have been, it would take a bold person to assert unreservedly that they were wrong. What has cigarette smoking really added to American civilization?

In one respect the tobacco manners have improved. In 1900 almost every grocer sold more chewing tobacco than he did smoking tobacco. The only tobacco that I can recall seeing in extra large boxes was the double thick, light B-L. The dark B-L, the Battle Axe, the Climax brands all came in smaller boxes, and the fancy Piper Heidsieck came in tin. But all of them outsold the smoking tobacco in plug, and except for Bull Durham, out of which smokers rolled their own, the prepared fine cuts were just beginning to take hold.

A now forgotten commodity was whole salt fish. In Maine these were more often pollock than cod. The sovereign Commonwealth of Massachusetts will allow no one to think of salt fish except in terms of the sacred cod, but that didn't daunt Maine folks half a century ago. Good Maine pollock salted just as well, weren't so heavy, and tasted better. Those salt fish reached the store in hundred pound bales, which were immediately opened and the fish then hung from rafters by their tails. Common crackers and milk made a good dish anyhow, but to be a real treat they needed, just as apple pie needs cheese, the addition of rich yellow flakes from salt pollock.

I have often been asked how one could tell a salt pollock from a salt cod. Easily, by the tail. The pollock's tail is notched while the cod's is straight-edged. The biggest Maine distributor for both kinds, through many years, was Lord Brothers of Portland, who each summer would take their grocer customers and sometimes the clerks on a deep-sea fishing cruise. It was after such an excursion that one of my father's clerks told a wild-eyed yarn about catching a fish that spit tobacco juice, referring probably to a squid.

One amazing point about the grocery stores of the first decade of this century was the stability of prices. During all the years that I had intimate knowledge of the business, only flour and sugar showed much variation in price. Common crackers were always eight cents a pound, Seward brand red Alaska salmon was always two cans for a quarter, Excelsior coffee was 25

cents a pound, Arm and Hammer Soda was seven cents, a quarter of a pound of cream of tartar was ten cents, and all ground spices were eight cents a quarter pound except ginger, which was one cent less. One of the reasons why prices varied little was the stability of overhead. Rent of a store was pretty well fixed; clerk hire was low and relatively unchanging; equipment was standardized. Horses, wagons and harnesses cost about the same through all the years. Perhaps a stronger reason for price stability lay in the much lesser social demand to keep up with the Joneses. Today most Americans like to look neat, eat well, and live a broad social life. We want an increasingly better standard of living. In short, was it not contentment with the relatively simple and unchanging community life that kept prices stable? Today our ways of living change so fast that prices cannot possibly stay put. Either our fashions and our greed cause supply to exceed demand and we have depression, or government steps in as the biggest customer, makes consumer goods scarce, demand exceeds supply, and we have inflation.

We aren't going back to those simple days. Make no mistake about that. Never again will the girls on the farms dress any differently from their sisters in the cities, nor will their mothers return to wood stoves and water drawn from the well, once they have enjoyed bottled gas and electric pumps. The stable prices are gone, but their loss has definite compensations. We cherish and enjoy today many things Ed Soule had never dreamed of when he used to recite "woodenware, wicks and yeast."

Chapter X

RUM AND GINGERBREAD

A BIG, brawny man from a farm ten miles up the river stepped into the little general store at Augusta on a November day in 1802.

"Hello, Sam, what can I do for you?" was the storekeeper's greeting.

"I want a pint of rum and a hunk of gingerbread."

Mention of rum is not unusual. We know it was a commodity for sale in every country store a hundred and fifty years ago. But, gingerbread—how does that get into the picture?

That unnamed merchant, who kept store in Augusta when John Adams was President of the United States, kept an account book now in the possession of Burleigh Nichols of Fairfield Center, Maine. Over a period of ten years, the two articles most frequently charged were rum and gingerbread. The accounts make it clear that the storekeeper purchased gingerbread from Thomas Dexter, in huge sheets at 12½ cents a sheet. Dexter was repeatedly credited with "8 sheets of gingerbread, \$1.00." The merchant then sold it, a sheet or less at a time, for 25 cents a sheet. Many a modern trader would be quite content with that one hundred per cent profit.

There is no evidence that the gingerbread was sold to householders. When a customer stocked up for home he didn't insult his wife by taking her any store-bought gingerbread. No, the gingerbread was largely for consumption on the premises. Settlers often traveled many miles to do a little trading at the store. They arrived hungry. Consequently, over and over again, the first items charged to an account on a given day are rum and gingerbread, and sometimes cheese. That was the customer's midday meal, eaten at the store before he started back on his long journey home.

Rum was a commodity so much in demand and considered so necessary that not even the following entry in the old Augusta account book should surprise us: "Widow Palmer—1 yard crape gauze, 58 cents; 1 gal. rum, \$1.00." Here was the complete outfit for the funeral—gauze for the widow's veil and rum to treat the mourners.

These records reveal the liquid measures used on the Kennebec a century and a half ago. While a quart was one-fourth of a gallon, as it is today, and a pint was one-half of a quart, a gill was not one-fourth, but rather one-half of a pint. The prices make that measure plain: one quart 28 cents, one pint 14 cents, one gill 7 cents, one glass 4 cents. Today the last two measures would be reversed; a glass is two gills or half a pint.

As one reads between the lines of the Augusta accounts, it takes little imagination to picture certain unwritten aspects of the transactions. For instance on September 6, 1802, one customer was charged: "one glass rum, .04; two glasses rum, .07; one pint rum, .14; your wife entertained at Soule's .50." Evidently the man started off mildly with a glass of rum, followed it quickly with two more glasses, then on top of that he downed a whole pint. By that time he may have passed out completely. At any rate the kindly storekeeper arranged for the man's wife to go to Soule's tavern, paid the bill of 50 cents and charged it to the man's account at the store.

Rum was such a common beverage that women thought it nothing unusual to partake of it. When we read in the Augusta merchant's accounts that one citizen was charged "1/2 pint rum delivered to your wife, .08" we may logically suspect that the woman consumed the half pint on the premises. Half a pint seems much too small a quantity to take home to the husband.

Occasionally rum was sold by these early stores in much larger quantities than glasses, pints and quarts, or even single gallons. On December 27, 1802, our Augusta dealer charged Benjamin Dow, Esq. with "32 gals. rum \$40.00." The designation "Esq." points to Dow as a citizen of prominence, as indeed he must have been to buy a whole barrel of rum. After the item in the old book the merchant wrote: "The rum was delivered last January and a note was taken, which note is now stolen." The whole transaction depended upon the honesty of Squire Dow. The storekeeper had lost the note, and the Squire could now in-

sist that he never bought the rum. But like most of the community leaders along the Kennebec, Squire Dow was a man of integrity. He paid the bill.

Various account books of storekeepers along the Kennebec in 1800 at Augusta, Waterville, Vassalboro—all agree on a common practice, the use at one and the same time of British and American systems of currency. Often the rate is entered in shillings and the price carried out in cents, as “ $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. tea @ $\frac{1}{10}$ (one shilling, ten pence) \$.60,” or “ $3\frac{1}{2}$ yds. India cotton @ $\frac{1}{3}$, \$.82.” We must bear in mind that the rate of exchange was arbitrary, not fluctuating like modern bankers’ rates. Let us see how that came about.

For many years after the United States adopted a decimal system of currency, the terms long used for British money continued. This was especially true of the shilling, the commonest unit in simple transactions. By 1800 it was almost universal practice in rural areas all over New England to consider a dollar the equivalent of six shillings. The term “three shillings” was used just as the term “four bits” is now used in the West, and with exactly the same meaning. The custom continued well into the 1830’s, as we shall see when we consider the subject of medical practice in that decade.

Sometimes a merchant would be a bit careless with his entries of certain conversions from shillings to cents. His trouble, of course, was how to treat the fractions. In one account book we find one shilling sixpence variously entered as 24, 25, and 26 cents. A single shilling was usually computed at 17 cents, which of course is the nearest whole number to its value of $16\frac{2}{3}$ cents when rated at six for a dollar; but two shillings are sometimes glibly entered as 35 cents, which was crowding the customer for an extra cent. Ten pence was most often set down as 14 cents, but occasionally as 15; a penny was conscientiously fixed at $1\frac{1}{3}$ cents, or 4 cents for 3 pence.

Perhaps the most astounding thing about the general stores of 150 years ago is the comparatively small number of different items in their stock. The general stores of 1900 carried hundreds of separate items, sometimes as many as a couple of thousand. But the range of commodities sold a hundred years earlier was much narrower. The oldest accounts often list molasses, sugar, salt, coffee, tea and raisins. One of our surprises comes in the

absence of any mention of flour. There are charges for wheat and Indian corn, an occasional bushel of rye, but no flour until 1805. Apparently everyone took grain to the mill and had his own flour ground, or else he could buy flour only at the mill, not at the store.

The first time flour was ever charged in any of the old accounts that have come to our attention was at the Augusta store in 1805, when N. Malborn was charged for two hundredweight, three quarters, and $26\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of flour for a total of \$11.94. This figures out at $301\frac{1}{2}$ pounds, or a little more than one and a half barrels. That charge stands out all by itself, because not until 1808 is flour mentioned again, when B. Davis was charged with "16 pounds flour \$.64."

Back in that time, twenty years before Maine became a state, most of the clothes worn both by men and by women were made at home, of cloth from the spinning wheels and hand looms, often from wool grown on the home farm. But as early as the dawn of the nineteenth century some cloth was sold in the country stores. Dress goods then available are revealed by a glance at the purchases which Nathaniel Page of Belgrade made at Augusta on November 15, 1802. Perhaps Nathaniel took his wife along on this trip to the store. It would be interesting to know whether he made it on horseback, or by canoe through the lakes then down the Messalonskee and the Kennebec. At any rate, Nathaniel's wife dominated the purchases, whether she was present or not. Nathaniel bought just one thing for himself, an axe priced at eleven shillings three pence, or \$1.87. His other purchases were 3 yards ribbed velvet \$4.50, 1 yard satin \$1.85, 2 skeins silk and 2 of thread \$.25, 2 yards India cloth \$.29, $\frac{1}{2}$ yard sheeting \$.25, 7 buttons \$.24, 1 pair morocco shoes \$1.17.

Prices, of course, are always relative. If goods were cheap, so also were wages. Yet some of the prices of 1802 do indeed make our mouths water. Here are a few items picked at random from accounts in Augusta and Waterville.

9 lb. 10 oz. Cheese	\$1.07
1 quarter Lamb	.27
1 doz. Eggs	.09
$4\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Butter	.59
1 Turkey $6\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.	.46
1 Goose 6 lb. 6 oz.	.35
1 Cord Wood	1.50

10 lb. Sheep's Wool	.63
1000 Shingles	.95
3 "Seegars"	.03
18 lb. Dry Fish	.36

Some articles, however, were expensive. A single nutmeg cost twelve cents, one lemon ten cents, a pound of chocolate 82 cents, a yard of forest cloth \$2.00.

The commonest ready-made article sold in the country stores of that era was the shawl, for which a usual price was \$1.17, or seven shillings. Occasionally a camel's hair shawl sold for as high as three dollars. Next to shawls came hats, but with one exception I have never seen a lady's hat charged in the old accounts. In 1798 a Waterville merchant charged "1 straw bonnet \$1.00." Every other charge for a hat was a man's, selling from 75 cents to \$1.75.

Did you ever hear of Bohea tea? The only time I encountered the word, before I saw these old Kennebec account books, was in the pages of Franklin's Autobiography. When Old Ben recorded his transactions to supply the unfortunate Braddock's army, he included twenty pounds of Bohea tea. In 1804, this tea was sold in Augusta for 47 cents a pound, while a Waterville merchant's charge for it was 50 cents. Probably that flat three shillings was just as easy to collect as was the odd price of 47 cents.

We must not get the idea that, in the time of John Adams, storekeepers along the Kennebec were paid in cash. They seldom saw any money. Almost all trading was by barter. John Soule, who kept the tavern where a wife was entertained while her husband consumed liquid refreshment at the store, was frequently charged for goods himself. But quite as often an item would appear to his credit, like this one: "John Soule, credit, by finding Henry Babcock, two meals and lodging, 64 cents." The word "finding," of course means board and lodging, more commonly used in the form of the past participle, as in "a dollar a day and found." At Waterville in 1796, David Berry was credited with a dollar for one day's work "getting logs out of Seabasticook river," and on the same day he was charged with one pair of worsted stockings \$1.50, one psalm book 50 cents, one large butter pot 34 cents. The merchant got a day's work out of Berry,

but somehow had to get \$1.34 more before that one day's purchases were paid for.

Sometimes the transactions seem very odd to a modern reader. In 1797 a Waterville storekeeper sold to Isaac Temple a bottle of Sephalin snuff for 35 cents, and set down against Temple also this strange item: "Paid Parker odds between hogs \$1.00." In 1798 the same merchant sold to John McKechnie four gallons of West Indies rum and one gallon of New England rum, with this appended notation: "to be paid in rum or cash."

Christopher Jenkins, in 1796, worked for a Waterville trader who noted that on Jenkins' behalf he paid Daniel Goodwin \$3.21, and that he had credited Jenkins with \$19.63 for "two month's work, one half day short at \$10 per month." The storekeepers all along the river took their pay in grain and vegetables, in meat and cord wood, in butter and eggs, even in gingerbread. They had to be shrewd and careful men when so little of the return came in cash.

The old stores sold a lot of horn combs at eleven cents apiece. As all readers of colonial history know, glass beads were much in demand for trade with the Indians. At Waterville and Augusta in 1800, those beads sold for three cents a string. Though thread is constantly mentioned in the accounts, the reader never encounters the word spool. The unit is either the skein or the knot. The charges read like this: "Henry Bolster, 28 knots brown thread, 50 cents."

I have never noted the sale of a small quantity of salt in any of those old books. It is usually a bushel of salt, and the smallest sale is a peck. What kind of salt was it? Certainly not modern, refined table salt as we know it. Nor was it necessarily rock or mineral salt. It may well have been what, in the store described in the preceding chapter, we used to call Liverpool salt, a somewhat powdery, often soggy, partly refined salt.

One Waterville storekeeper, just before 1800, was George Fabyan. His store was clearly on the west side of the river, because the old Winslow names—Pattee, Howard and Lithgow—appear very seldom in the accounts, while old Waterville names are frequent. One customer was Waterville's first physician, Obadiah Williams, who gave to the town the site that is still its municipal center. Another was Squire Isaac Temple, who built a big house at what is now the corner of Front and Temple

streets. A third was John McKechnie, who made the survey of lots to which Waterville's oldest deeds go back, and who built the first two story house in the town, near the present corner of Main and Silver streets.

One of the oldest entries in Fabyan's book refers to the grandfather of Waterville's first United States senator. In 1848 Wyman Moor went to Washington as a senator from Maine. His grandfather, Daniel Moor, was one of Waterville's first settlers, and it was against him that storekeeper Fabyan recorded the charge "To my horse to ride six miles, 50 cents." On Fabyan's accounts appear other names distinguished in local history. They are set down as purchasers of rum and brandy, of cloth and crockery, of sugar and salt, of psalm books and dictionaries, of bandana handkerchiefs and shawls. One of the oddest items in the book concerns Waterville's famous physician, Dr. Moses Appleton: "Dr. Appleton, to cash you took for pack of cards, 50 cents." Other customers were Abijah Smith, who added to Obadiah Williams' gift to the town an adjoining piece of land; Reuben Kidder the lawyer, and Elnathan Sherwin, moderator of Waterville's first town meeting and one of its first selectmen.

Sometimes a customer would get away with short payment, but the storekeeper was sure to make careful notation of the lapse or error. For instance, on November 2, 1804, one trader recorded: "Jeremiah Richards of Fayette, to short pay for knives and forks, 7 cents." In April, 1805, Jonathan Towle was charged: "Due on one gal. molasses, 4 cents." When payment was too long withheld, the merchant did not hesitate to bring suit, carefully adding the legal costs to the customer's account. In May, 1806, one trader wrote this item: "Nathaniel Folsom, 45 lb. rush iron, \$2.70; one piece rush iron about 30 lb. The reason of this being charged in this manner was he took the wrong piece."

That we may get a better look at the early merchant's stock, let us note a few charges selected from the years 1796 to 1805. They include a pair of boot legs, a bed cord, a cow bell, ink powder, brimstone, flints, liquid soap, a pair of ox-bows, a string of sleigh bells, a clay pipe, a snuff box, a slate and pencil, and a pair of "specks."

The old storekeepers did a lot of business outside their stores. They dealt in lumber, in fisheries, in real estate, and they frequently did errands for customers. They loaned money, went

bonds, endorsed notes. In June, 1805, an Augusta merchant entered in his book: "Jeremiah Glidden, to going to Vassalborough on your business, 50 cents, to wine 7 cents." Exact interpretation is impossible, but we may hazard a guess that the storekeeper, not Glidden, drank the wine, and that the seven cents is part of what we would today call an expense account.

One of the most versatile of the old storekeepers of the Kennebec did business at Getchell's Corner, Vassalboro, in 1824. He had a potash factory, he owned river boats, he controlled fish seines, he sold groceries and dry goods, and he notarized documents. Frequent entries in his book are headed "Longboat." Apparently he operated one of those ancient craft that plied a lively business between the head of tide at Augusta and Ticonic Falls at Waterville. It was in such a boat in 1818, that Jeremiah Chaplin, his wife and children, as well as his seven theological students, came up the river to Waterville for the founding of what is now Colby College. Those boats carried both freight and passengers. They were poled along close to the bank or were sometimes pulled by oxen on a tow path. They provided the common means of transportation long before Holman Day's fabulous steamboat *Ezra Johnson*, which he claimed sailed away up into a Sidney field on an early morning dew.

The "Longboat" is frequently charged by this merchant with furnished supplies, as on May 20, 1824, when it is debited with half a bushel of potatoes and five pounds of pork. On the same day William Crosby is charged 75 cents for a rafting oar. This may have been for use on Crosby's own craft, but it is more likely that Crosby was charged with one of the merchant's oars that he, as a workman, had broken.

The squire and leading citizen of Getchell's Corner, Jacob Southwick, did a lot of business with this storekeeper. On a single day in 1824 Southwick was charged for 8 lb. spikes, 7 lb. nails, 8 qt. New England rum, 21 feet plank, 2 gal. sperm oil, one paint brush, and 60 lb. resin. In April, 1825, Southwick bought two quarts of boiled oil. The same commodity was also sold to others. This reference and the other to sperm oil lead us to conjecture that 1825 was about the time when people in the Kennebec Valley were changing from candles to oil for illumination.

Potash was one of the earliest articles regularly sold along the Kennebec. The export of potash was older than that of lum-

ber. The first settlement of any land necessitated the burning of many trees. This produced huge quantities of ashes, which the settler collected and exchanged at the nearest store for goods. The trader bleached the ashes and conveyed the potash in barrels to tide water, where it was shipped to Europe. A letter written by Sir Francis Bernard, British governor of Massachusetts in 1762, attests to the importance of Maine potash. Our Getchell's Corner trader conducted a big trade in that commodity. The record shows that, in July 1824, he bought this business from Daniel Marshall, whom he then credits with "Potash arch and chimney \$24.00, three potash kettles \$112.50, one ladle 50 cents, one spud 25 cents, 7 leaches \$21.00, two receivers \$1.50."

I had always known that potash was used in making soap, but I had no idea why the potash trade became so important in New England until I read the account of the industry in Dorothy Canfield Fisher's *Vermont Tradition*. Mrs. Fisher has graciously given me permission to use, in our Kennebec story, the results of her research, for what was true of Vermont potash must also have been true of the same product in Maine.

Mrs. Fisher discovered that, by 1790, the New England states were making and shipping sufficient potash to provide soap enough for every man, woman and child on earth to take a dozen baths a day and to wash all the world's clothes besides. Certainly ordinary demand for soap could not account for such sales of potash. As she dug deeper and deeper into the mystery, Mrs. Fisher gradually unraveled the puzzle. She found the answer, in one word, to be wool. Good quality wool cannot be made without using soap repeatedly in the process. That use had been a closely guarded secret of the European woolen guilds in the Middle Ages, finally a monopoly of the guilds of Florence. But even before the Middle Ages people had known how to make potash. The Roman writer, Pliny, speaks of making soap from water dipped through wood ashes, combined with hot grease or oil. The Florentine secret leaked to Holland and Flanders, where the wool-makers learned to devise fuller's soap out of potash and oil. Then the British learned the secret and felt so strongly about using all home-grown wool for cloth manufacture that they forbade the exportation of raw wool to the continent under pain of death.

Whether by Englishmen, Dutchmen or Italians, woolen goods could not be manufactured without soap—a lot of soap. Soap

could not be made without potash, and the principal source of potash was wood ashes. Already wood was a carefully protected crop in England. To cut down trees for firewood had become bad enough. To cut them down just to burn them up for ashes, was unthinkable. So for a time potash was brought to England from the Baltic countries. But that meant sending British money out of the nation, upsetting to the economy. Why not turn to the American colonies for the precious supply? So, in 1751, Parliament passed "An Act for Encouraging the Making of Pott Ashes and Pearl Ashes in the British Plantations in America."

From the middle of the eighteenth century British wool manufacturers clamored for more and more American potash. In 1770 the export amounted to \$290,000 and it did not end with the Revolution. Three years after the ratification of the United States Constitution, the trade had increased to \$840,000 a year. Mrs. Fisher explains that it was precisely when the demand for potash was increasing rapidly that settlers were moving into the thickly wooded country of northern New England. Many such a settler cleared off the mortgage on his acres by the sale of ashes from the trees he had to burn anyhow to clear his land.

For one of the few occasions in Maine history the farmer had a seller's market. The demand exceeded the supply. When the Haywards and the Westons loaded barrels of potash on flat boats at Skowhegan Island, they could be sure of a market at Getchell's Corner or Augusta. Before roads were built, Mrs. Fisher assures us, a couple of pack-horses could carry over the narrow trails a load of potash worth fifty dollars, ten times the value of the same weight in wheat. No wonder the old account books of the Kennebec Valley speak so often of potash.

In those days it took a lot of liquid refreshment to get in the hay, and evidently Jacob Southwick had a big crop. Five times in one month is repeated the item "rum for haymakers." It looks as if customers sometimes helped themselves to refreshment. How else can one interpret this item: "J. L., two bottles rum, taken and not charged the last two weeks, 44 cents."

This Getchell's Corner dealer managed to dispose of anything that came into his hands. He charged Daniel Marshall 22 cents for "damaged bacon delivered to Getchell." He made many another shrewd bargain. In August, 1825, he paid John Gray \$4.67 for making fourteen pairs of shoes. This was, of course,

for the work alone; the purchaser furnished the material. In September he collected \$1.50 from Benjamin Jacobs for "trip in boat to Hallowell" where the trader was going anyhow with a load of goods. But perhaps his neatest trade had been a year earlier, in June 1824, when on one day he sold Jacob Southwick a merino sheep for \$3.50, and on the very next day sold him 3½ pounds of merino wool for \$2.10. It is evident he sheared the sheep before he delivered the animal to Southwick.

The biggest seasonal business of this merchant at Getchell's Corner was the spring run of fish. In fact his account book casts revealing light on that once thriving industry of the Kennebec. The book never mentions salmon, although we know they continued to come up the river until after the dam was built at Augusta, and some of the big fish managed to leap over even that obstacle. Probably pollution had as much to do as the dams with ending the salmon runs.

The fish taken at Getchell's Corner in 1824 were herring and shad. They were not weighed, but counted. They were sold by the piece, not by the pound. In 1824, the season opened on May 19 with a good price, \$2.75 a hundred for herring and ten cents apiece for shad. The next day the price had dropped to two dollars a hundred for herring and eight cents each for shad. Before the season closed on June 10, the price had dropped to a cent apiece for herring and four cents for shad, then as the run thinned out it went up again to the original \$2.75 and ten cents.

Some conception of the size of the fish-run up the Kennebec 125 years ago can be gained from the fact that, between May 24 and June 10, 1824, this one dealer sold 26 barrels of herring and 500 shad. Apparently he did not buy from casual fishermen, but operated his own seine, hiring men to do the actual work, for on June 18 he credited John Dennett with \$4.00 for fishing. That was eight days before the season closed, and may have been Dennett's whole wages to that date. On July 6 he entered a larger credit to Nathaniel Hosmer: "By his part of all fish taken in the seine \$53.27." By July first the trader had no more fresh herring, but was selling them smoked for one cent each.

This merchant not only operated his own seine, but also outfitted other fishermen. In May he charged Daniel Marshall for salt, rum and other items "for his fisherman," and in June he charged Reuben Partridge \$5.83 for "boarding his fisherman."

The records kept all up and down the river, whether at Augusta or Waterville or Getchell's Corner, contain fantastic spelling. The chief point of interest is not the misspelling of common words; we don't have to go back to 1800 to find that. The noteworthy point is the different spellings of the same word, in the same book, in the same handwriting. What biographers assert about Shakespeare seems to have been true of these Kennebec traders two hundred years after Shakespeare's time. The Bard of Avon, we are told, couldn't decide how to spell his own name; he spelled it several different ways. Likewise, one of our Kennebec merchants couldn't decide how to spell the days of the week. Saturday appears not only in its correct spelling, but also as "Saterdag," "Saterdy," and "Satdy." Monday is sometimes "Munday," sometimes "Mundy," and once "Moonday." Of course Wednesday was the big stumbling block. We find it as "Wensday," "Wensdy," "Wendsday," and "Winsday." Thursday is often written "Thirdsday," which by any reckoning it could not possibly be. Perhaps it did have meaning when he wrote it "Thirstday." That might call for a new barrel of rum.

These old spellings cast historical light on the rural pronunciation. When the record reads: "One arthenware jug," it is clear that people of that time pronounced *earth* as *arth*. When we see the item "boot laigs," we know how they pronounced *legs*, and *eggs*, and we can understand why many Maine folk still pronounce them that way, much to the amusement of out-of-state visitors. When the storekeeper writes down a charge for "narrer tape" or for a "wheelbarrer axle," we know how he and his neighbors pronounced words ending in *ow*. "Mending chimley 50 cents," shows that this pronunciation of chimney, still occasionally heard from the lips of old people in the back country, was common a century and a half ago. But when we note an Augusta merchant's charge of "one cagg and brass lock with same," we cannot be sure whether he pronounced *keg* to rhyme with *vague* or with *bag*. In my own boyhood I have heard both pronunciations.

They were the successors of the old Pilgrim trading posts, were these storekeepers of the Kennebec. They no longer made huge profits in Indian furs, because the red man was gone. But most of them prospered through sheer Yankee shrewdness. Some of them became moderately rich. And all of them had a busy

interesting life, bartering, charging, collecting, as to the weary traveler arriving at the store they dispensed the inevitable rum and gingerbread.

Chapter XI

OPERATION OBSTET

“**O**PERATION Obstet \$3.00.” Over and over again that item appears in the account book of Dr. Ambrose Howard of Sidney, who practiced medicine in that Maine community from 1802 to 1834. Every month in the year, and often several times a month, year after year, Dr. Howard brought some child into the world, and his uniform fee was three dollars. Just once, in all the years of his accounts did the doctor reduce his fee. It was on May 10, 1806, when he set down in his book: “Widow Rebecca Davenport, operation obstet \$1.00.”

The question immediately arises why the good doctor made any charge at all. The picture is clear. After her husband's death a woman of Sidney had given birth to a child. From the doctor's record of the previous years we know that she had other children. Here was a widow in straitened circumstances with small children already dependent upon her when, after her husband is in his grave, along comes another tiny mouth to feed. If anyone seemed to deserve charity from the town physician, attention without any charge, it was this widow. We know that Dr. Howard was a kindly, helpful man. He drove long distances over wretched roads to help the suffering, and like thousands of other disciples of Galen and Hippocrates, he never pressed for payment. Why then did he charge this widow a dollar?

The answer is that to give his services without charge would have been an unforgivable insult. Unless their circumstances became truly desperate and drove them to complete loss of pride, the early settlers did not accept charity. Kindly help from neighbors, yes. That was expected, taken for granted. But free assistance from a professional man or a merchant, No. That was next door to being “on the town” and quite unthinkable. So Dr. Howard set down a charge of \$1.00. He could cut his price, but

he could not give free service. There is no evidence that the doctor ever collected that dollar; he may actually have given free service after all. The point is that the charge was made.

Many persons still living remember the general practitioners of the horse and buggy days. My own childhood memory is of a bearded Bridgton doctor who filled the room with the smell of medicine as soon as he had doffed his big fur coat. By the time I came on the scene, the horseback riding doctors had pretty well disappeared. Fortunately I recall one of them. He was a homeopathic physician and hence was always stocked with a vast variety of pills. Most of the year he drove a smart trotter attached to a small buggy or a low sleigh, but in mud-time he rode horseback. His mount was a chestnut mare, who could carry him at a smart canter when the mud was not too deep, and who would wallow through the sink-holes without a quiver of hesitation. The last pair of saddle bags I can remember seeing in regular use carried the mild homeopathies of that Bridgton doctor.

Saddlebags were the common carriers of every doctor's equipment in the days when our Maine settlements were young. Those of the notorious Dr. Valorus Coolidge of Waterville are still preserved in the museum at Good Will Schools. Others are still stored away in attics, and some have found their way into the antique shops that now clutter our roadsides almost as ubiquitously as do the automobile graveyards. Saddlebags are among the forgotten essentials of our Kennebec yesterdays.

The horse and buggy doctors of the 1890's lived a strenuous life. Plenty of sentimental books have been written about them. But no sentiment is needed to state the cold, hard facts. In all weathers, at all hours, they were called out. In rural areas the telephone was unknown. The only way to call the doctor was to go and fetch him. Often the patient lived ten or more miles from the doctor's residence. Our Maine philanthropist, Dr. George G. Averill of Waterville, has told the writer of calls from as far away as twenty miles when, as a young physician, he was practicing medicine at Enfield and other towns along the Penobscot. Over drifted winter roads, it was a day's work to reach the doctor, and another day's work to get him to the patient. Even when called from a shorter distance, the doctor might face a maternity case that would keep him waiting for hours. Talk about rain and snow and sleet posing no insurmountable barriers

to the mail carriers. Those fellows just weren't in the same class with the country doctors. The medics were deterred neither by hell nor high water.

If the physicians of 1890 lived a hard, rugged life, their way must have been lined with plush carpet and strewn with roses compared to their predecessors of 1790. Those doctors of a century and a half ago really had it tough. Not only did they lack buggies; often they didn't even have a road. They traveled across cold, wind-swept bridges when there was any bridge at all, but oftener they had to ford the streams or cross on treacherous ice. When they amputated a patient's limb, they had to call in the neighbors to hold him down, for they had no anesthetics. By standards of modern medicine they were woefully ignorant. They bled patients to death; they deprived folks of fresh air instead of prescribing it; they never heard of sterilizing an instrument. In fact they did a lot of crude, unscientific things, but they did the best they could in their day. And that best was a lot.

Very few of those early doctors made their living at medicine. Versatile fellows, skilled in more than one craft, they made "doctorin'" only one of their vocations. Sylvester Gardiner, founder of the Kennebec city of that name, is better known as financier and promoter than he is as physician. The fame of Dr. John McKechnie of Waterville rests not on his practice of medicine, but on his surveys for the Plymouth Company. Asa Quimby of Albion operated in lumber more than he did on patients. Daniel Stevens, China's first doctor, delivered more wheat to the mill than he did babies to nervously expectant fathers. Stephen Barton, who came to Vassalboro with a bag of medicines in 1774, ran a ferry; at least he owned it, though his wife and boys probably attended to most of its trips across the river. So famous were men like these for other occupations that it is easy for a later generation to overlook their medical skill. In Waterville, for instance, the place of first physician is usually assigned to Dr. Obadiah Williams, who practiced the profession in that town as early as 1792. The fact is, however, that Dr. John McKechnie preceded Dr. Williams by more than thirty years. The difference was that Williams was primarily a doctor, while with McKechnie his fame as surveyor and manufacturer overshadowed his medical skill.

Both of these men must have been well worth knowing. They belonged in anybody's list of "great characters I have met." McKechnie had learned his medicine in Scotland, had come to this country in 1755, and became chief surveyor of the reorganized Plymouth Company for its Kennebec lands. When he began those surveys, he lived at Bowdoinham, but in 1771 moved to Winslow and soon settled on the west side of the river. He was Johnny on the spot when Arnold's expedition arrived at Fort Halifax in 1775, attending the sick and injured as they were brought ashore from the boats. He built the first dam and the first sawmill on the Messalonskee stream. When the lots which he had carefully surveyed were taken for settlement, he shrewdly reserved for himself Lot 103, which included the water power of Ticonic Falls.

Dr. Obadiah Williams, though also a man of wide interests, stuck more closely to his profession than did Dr. McKechnie. His medical career had begun with a military tinge, for he had served as a surgeon under General Stark in the Revolutionary War. In 1792 he came to Winslow and settled on the Waterville side of the river. There, says Waterville's official history, he became "the first physician in what is now Waterville." How forgetful that statement is of John McKechnie our preceding paragraph has made clear. Yet we must remember that Dr. McKechnie had been dead ten years when Dr. Williams came to town, and that to old timers in the 1860's it really seemed as if the latter had been the first doctor in the community.

Interestingly enough, Dr. Williams settled on Lot 104, directly adjoining the lot which his predecessor had cunningly reserved for himself. So generous and public spirited was he as a citizen that the new town, set aside from Winslow in 1802, came very near to being called Williamsburg, but for some reason the name Waterville prevailed. Dr. Williams's name headed the petition to the General Court to establish the new town. He gave the land on which the town building—combined meeting house and town house—was erected, and together with his friend Abijah Smith gave the lots which now comprise the City Hall common in the commercial heart of Waterville. He died in 1799 at the early age of 47, but he had lived long enough to establish himself as a foremost citizen of Central Maine.

Waterville's best remembered physician of the olden days was neither Williams nor McKechnie, in spite of the prominence of both. When you mention an old-time doctor of the community, Waterville folk instinctively think of Moses Appleton. He was a real doctor of the old school. Graduate of Dartmouth College in 1791, he received his professional diploma from the Massachusetts Medical Society in 1796. Immediately he settled in Winslow; and like his two predecessors he chose the west side. There he established Waterville's first pharmacy. Dr. Appleton showed the same interest in civic affairs that Dr. Williams had shown. In 1806 he was chairman of the school committee; he was one of the founders of the Waterville Bank, an incorporator of the first Ticonic Bridge, a substantial investor in real estate and builder of several fine houses. He headed a committee to observe the semi-centennial of the Declaration of Independence. In the absence of a minister, he was frequently called upon to give a sermon in the meeting house.

Alert and formal looking in business, Dr. Appleton was in some respects a surviving figure of a passing age. Many years after others had abandoned the practice, he wore his hair down his back in an old fashioned queue. One day he went to a colored barber on Waterville's Water Street to have his hair trimmed and dressed. In the barber's chair the doctor fell asleep. Suddenly waking with a start, he shouted to the barber, "Look out for my queue!" The barber replied: "You is too late, sah. It's gone." The doctor had been victim of a quicker and more painless amputation than any he had ever performed on a patient.

The Appleton fee books are filled with fascinating items. In his first such book, begun in 1796, actually records his earliest practice in Waterville, his first patient was none other than his noted predecessor, Dr. Obadiah Williams, out of whose mouth young Appleton pulled a tooth. In 1799 he recorded: "It is agreed with Jabez Mathews that he pay me at the rate of two cords of wood per annum in consideration of being supplied with materials for keeping his family cured of the itch." Like most physicians of the time, Dr. Appleton sometimes had yearly contracts to care for a family. He made such an agreement with Jonathan Clark whereby he promised a year's medical attention in return for a year's supply of boots for the doctor's family.

In a letter written to Moses Appleton by his brother Nathaniel we get a glimpse of Dartmouth College, where Dr. Appleton had taken his bachelor's degree. Nathaniel wrote in 1794, three years after his brother's graduation: "I got away from New Ipswich on Sunday afternoon and arrived in Hanover the next Tuesday about dark. I found a considerable number of acquaintances there and became slightly acquainted with several more. My examination came on Saturday. It was not hard, and I found no difficulty in gaining admission. Several were examined with me, among them Charles Dunbar, your former pupil. I hear that the exhibitions of all the societies, including the fraternity and the Beta Kappa, were hissed by a large number. Tuesday evening saw a beautiful illumination, after which forty sky rockets were fired off. I was pleased with the Commencement exercises and saw several of your classmates take their second degree. I would be much obliged if you would purchase and send to me a little Tully, as I have sold mine and wish not to be without one. I had as lief have a second-hand one."

Through the Appleton family correspondence we are given a glimpse of how close were family ties a century and more ago. Brothers and sisters kept track of each other by exchange of long, newsy letters. Though one of Dr. Appleton's brothers went to Europe on the Grand Tour, they did not lose touch with each other. When the doctor's own children grew up and left home, some of them married locally and settled down in the home town, but with those who went to other places a constant exchange of letters kept close the family ties.

In 1834, Moses Appleton Jr., the doctor's youngest son, went to Bangor to make his way in the world. The father commissioned the son to find out all he could about bridge building in the Penobscot town, because Waterville was concerned about replacement of the Ticonic Bridge, carried out in the big freshet of 1832. Young Moses duly informed his father that three sections of trellis work would be necessary for arches of more than 80 feet chord. It would cost \$18 a foot, but would be worth it. He advised good stone piers, not easily washed away, and that strong wooden pins be used. Young Moses was all for a covered bridge, "roofed the whole length." He concluded with a canny business request: "Please write me whether the bridge stock is now worth anything."

In one of his letters, the doctor's namesake showed himself the needy bachelor. "Please, Mother, put collars on all my new shirts. I never wear the dickey business and most all my shirts are collarless." But soon afterward he need turn no longer to Mother for collars. He married, understood why his parents could not attend the wedding, but was peeved because a Waterville man who was in Bangor at the time failed to appear for the ceremony. "Even though Mr. X from Waterville was here in Bangor, I could not prevail upon him to look in upon us. At least it seems he thought best to be absent. He said he did not come to attend such festivals, but really I did not think it a sufficient excuse."

In spite of the rigid standards of obedience in the old-time homes, some of the young folks asserted themselves with no little conceit. In a letter to his mother, written the very first year he was in Bangor, young Moses Appleton said: "What do you think in regard to my offer about money matters, Mother? If you have no good use for the money, I think you had better let me have it. You will certainly call it a good investment and not run any hazards." What abounding confidence! Here we have a young man giving investment advice to the wife of the man who was one of the shrewdest investors in the Kennebec Valley.

The alumni records of Colby College tell us that Isaac A. Jewett of Columbus, Ohio, attended the college for one year, 1824-25. How a young man came so far to attend an institution less than ten years old and scarcely known even in New England, is revealed in a letter written to Dr. Moses Appleton by his brother Samuel in Boston. "Master Jewett goes to Waterville to put himself in your care. His aunt and Uncle Isaac think it best he should have a college education. For my own part, I do not know what is best for him. Still I think he may as well remain at least one year at the college in Waterville. I wish you to pay particular attention to his morals and keep him studiously employed. He does not lack talent, but I think his manners may be improved. He wiggles and colts too much; he speaks too loud and vehement; within doors he walks too fast. I am sure you can never err on these points. You can easily teach him a little moderation, but I recommend your doing it by degrees, and only speak to him mildly when you think he errs on the points I have mentioned."

We may suspect that Waterville was like many of the other Kennebec towns in 1835, so that Dr. Appleton's revealing letter to his brother Aaron in Keene, New Hampshire, may well have described conditions in Gardiner or Augusta or Skowhegan. "Great changes have taken place in our village within two or three years. Almost all our mills and water privileges have changed owners at very liberal prices. We have now five meeting houses, with constant preaching in four of them every Sabbath. Our Baptist minister, where I usually attend, did admit today that there might be Christians among that class of believers who take from the Savior's head that crown of glory which was placed there by the Father. I mean the Unitarians. During the speculative excitement of last summer, real estate got up 50 to 100 per cent above the usual mark in this place, but now in cold winter speculation is rather quiet. I sold last summer a small parcel of land, about one and a half acres, in Winslow, for \$600, which ten years ago cost me \$50—a good speculation for a small one. We have steamboat conveyance from Waterville to Boston when the Kennebec is high."

He was quite a man, that Dr. Moses Appleton. Though he died more than a hundred years ago, he lived a busy and varied life of honesty, integrity, and benevolent public spirit which marks him as a noble example of a great profession.

Absorbed in the wide-spread affairs of the Appleton family, we have wandered a bit from the practice of medicine. Let us get back on that professional track by returning to the man whose *Operation Obstet* opened this chapter, Dr. Ambrose Howard of Sidney. His account book is a veritable history of medical practice in the Kennebec Valley in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

We have already referred to Dr. Howard's uniform charge of \$3.00 for obstetrical service. He likewise had a uniform charge for pulling a tooth. It was seventeen cents. Can you guess why that odd amount? Why not twenty cents or even a quarter of a dollar? The answer is found in a practice long since forgotten, but common all over northern New England in that long ago time. It took our Yankee ancestors, especially those in the rural districts, a long time to get used to the new United States currency. Ever since the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, all New England had traded everything in terms of pounds, shillings and

pence. When the new national government decided to adopt a decimal system of currency, the country merchants set up a convenient system of evaluating the new money in terms of the old, and it was a system which had no relation to the values in international exchange. A dollar was arbitrarily fixed as equivalent to six shillings. One-sixth of a dollar is 16 $\frac{2}{3}$ cents, and its nearest whole figure is 17 cents. Dr. Ambrose Howard charged 17 cents for pulling a tooth, because probably for a hundred years in both Old and New England the regular charge for that service had been one shilling. In the possession of Mr. Arthur Ellis of Fairfield, to whom I owe most of my information about Dr. Howard, is the ugly iron gadget with which Dr. Howard used to yank out those seventeen-cent teeth. One look at it might convince you that Dr. Howard ought to have paid the patient seventeen cents for the privilege of using it on him.

That shilling unit shows up in other services of the doctor. His charge for letting blood—one of the commonest treatments in his day—was 34 cents (two shillings). He charged the same for a bottle of elixir of paregoric, and his fifty cents for a bottle of jaundice bitters represented the usual three shillings. Patients with a mouthful of ailing teeth enjoyed cut rates. In 1814 the doctor charged Walter Parkman \$1.25 for extracting all of his upper teeth. That must have been quite an ordeal without anesthetics. In fact the pain which some of those patients endured before the discovery of anesthesia can be read between the lines of the doctor's accounts. For instance, he charged John Matthews two dollars for "examining a wound of the head, extracting the pieces of fractured cranium, and dressing the wound of your wife's brother." Samuel Hovey paid the doctor three dollars for two operations, one extracting a tumor from the cheek of Sam's wife, and the other for removing a tumor from "his servant girl's back."

James Thatcher was one of Dr. Howard's regular customers. Once in every year from 1807 to 1812, the doctor set down his charge of \$3.00 for a Thatcher baby. Between times he attended all members of the Thatcher family for all sorts of ills. He saw the children through mumps and measles and whooping cough. Indeed Thatcher ran up quite a bill, but it seems rubbing it in a bit to find the doctor setting down in Thatcher's account this

charge: "Two visits to the school marm boarding at your house, \$1.00."

How did Dr. Howard's patients pay their bills? As you may suspect, payment was seldom made in money. Paper money was deservedly unpopular. It was always at a discount from its printed value, and frequently it proved worthless. Specie—gold and silver coins—represented the only respected money and was almost unbelievably scarce. My great grandmother Blake, who lived until I was twelve years old and whom I therefore remember very well, often told me that in her girlhood in the 1830's the family would sometimes go an entire year without seeing a gold or silver coin.

If Dr. Howard got few of his fees in money, he got them in almost everything else. Samuel Blaisdell got credit on the doctor's books for half a bushel of beans and \$1.33 for pasturing a heifer. James Sturgis met part of his bill with \$3.67 worth of mill refuse boards. Ebenezer Morse worked off \$3.50 of his bill by chopping wood for the doctor and also got credit of 38 cents for half a bushel of beets. For the extraction of those tumors from his wife and his hired girl, Sam Hovey paid the whole three dollars in English turnips. Jonas Perry owed the doctor \$11.76. He paid it off by making hats for the doctor and his boys. Obadiah Longley ran up a four-year bill of \$20.85. He paid it by handing over to Dr. Howard 11 pounds of bacon, 22 pounds of cheese, a hay cutter, a bushel basket, 12 pounds of flax, a bushel of oats and 89 cents in cash. David Daniels apparently had no cash. After giving the doctor two bushels of wheat, three pecks of beets, three pair of sheep, and getting credit of fifty cents for driving those sheep to the river, Daniels gave the doctor his note for \$4.43.

Levi Moore apparently had a big family that needed a lot of attention. From 1808 to 1814 his bill totaled \$34.26. To his credit in payment Dr. Howard entered in his accounts wool, potatoes, veal, a ewe sheep, corn, and two days' harrowing with oxen. During those six years Levi paid the doctor just one dollar in cash. But even that was better than Joseph Clark could do. To pay his doctor's bills Clark chopped wood, made fence, picked rocks, planted crops and reaped oats for the physician. Evidently he still found time to go fishing, for among his credits are "two shad 16 cents" and "8 pounds corned fish 50 cents."

William Ambrose found an easier way to meet his bill than Clark's resort to wood chopping and rock picking. He put out his twelve year old son to work for the doctor for eleven days at fifty cents a day. Joshua Howard may or may not have been a relative. Anyhow the doctor charged him full fees—a total of \$16.52, and managed to collect all of it except ten cents, by getting the use of Joshua's time harrowing with four oxen, then accepting delivery of 103 pounds of beef, half a ton of hay, twenty pounds of mutton and four barrels of potatoes.

By no means did Dr. Howard collect all his bills. Like every other country doctor, and probably every physician of that or any other day, he had plenty of uncollected and perhaps uncollectible accounts. From one Henry N. the doctor took a lot of blood but little pay. He bled Henry seven times in the year 1808 at 34 cents a bleeding. Jabez H. owed three dollars for one of those operation obstets. He got credit for sixty cents for putting a gutter around the doctor's chimney, but he never paid the remaining \$2.40. So there was at least one youngster in Sidney, a hundred and fifty years ago, who could claim he was brought into the world for sixty cents.

Sometimes the doctor lost a patient and had to collect his bill from surviving relatives. The honesty and family loyalty of country people in the old days is frequently shown by the credits in Dr. Howard's accounts. In six years Abial Lovejoy ran up a bill of \$15.36. It had begun in 1806. In 1813, after Abial's death, his sons Stephen and William paid the bill in full, paying at the same time a bill of \$5.83 contracted by Abial's widow.

Although Dr. Howard owned considerable property, he found a way to meet histown taxes without parting with cash. He could, in fact, more than pay his taxes by caring for the town poor. And when he treated the poor of other towns, that was real gravy, for it was almost the only service for which he received cash. In 1808, for instance, he made two visits to the poor of Augusta and received from the Augusta town treasurer \$3.34 in cash.

Not all of the records in Dr. Howard's account book refer to medical services. One of those non-medical accounts is worth our notice. In 1808 the doctor settled an estate for Widow Abigail Robinson. His charges were carefully entered as three days' examining claims of your husband's estate \$3.75, one day as com-

missioner of your husband's estate \$1.25, one journey to the Fort (Fort Western) \$1.25, two journeys to Fort and Hook (Hallowell) \$2.50, paying a note \$9.44, paying sundry bills \$14.00, order on Esquire Thomas \$4.80, medicines 51 cents. The total came to \$37.50. How did Dr. Howard get his pay? Very simply. He took one of the widow's horses and credited her with the exact amount of his bill, \$37.50.

The time came, of course, when for Dr. Howard operation obstet turned to operation moritum. The grim reaper caught up with the doctor and relatives opened his will. That document, still preserved among Arthur Ellis's papers, reveals the meticulous care the old timers took in disposing of the smallest possessions. Much has been made of Shakespeare's will, wherein he bequeathed to his wife his second best bed. Ambrose Howard did better than that. "I give to my wife two of the best feather beds, bedsteads, cords, under beds, bolsters and pillows. I give her two of the best coverlets and two of the bedsteads, all the woolen blankets, and all sheets and pillow cases." In long enumeration he lists other bequests to Mrs. Howard, among them one cow, one large looking glass, one pounding barrel, one iron-bound butter firkin, all the small glass bottles and one three-pint green glass bottle. More than a hundred years after that will was probated, it strikes us as strange for a man to bequeath to his wife the kind of property we today take for granted as being hers by right—bed clothes, table linen, dishes, knives and forks. But those old timers like Ambrose Howard knew both the law and the custom of their day. If they wanted a surviving wife to have any of the household articles, they must enumerate them in the will, for every household object was legally the property of the husband.

The doctor remembered his son in far away New Orleans. "I give to my eldest son, Erasmus Darwin Howard, a note which he gave me for \$268.40. I give him Paley's *Moral and Political Philosophy*, Darwin's *Loononia* in two volumes, Foster *On Popular Ignorance*, and six volumes of the *New York Medical Repository*."

Like most careful business men, Dr. Howard wanted to make sure that all his debts were cleared. He took no chance on the executor's settling the debts in his own way; careful instructions were laid down which the executor must explicitly follow. "It

is my will that half of the mills that I bought of William Lovejoy shall be sold to pay a debt I owe to Samuel Danbar, and the surplus, if any, be appropriated to pay my other debts. It is my will that a debt of about \$300, due me from William and Hiram Lovejoy, be collected and let out on undoubted security on interest payable annually, punctually collected and paid to my wife so long as she remains my widow."

Dr. Howard made sure that his second son and executor, Barnabas, should have equal opportunity with his New Orleans brother to improve his mind. "It is my will that my medical library be sold, and that my executor appropriate the proceeds to purchase such books and periodical publications as are calculated to improve his own mind and the minds of his family."

When appraisers took inventory of an estate a hundred years ago, they literally left nothing unlisted. Preserved with the Howard will, among Mr. Ellis's papers, is the inventory of Dr. Howard's estate. It amounted to a bit more than five thousand dollars, which was a comfortable fortune in those days in the Kennebec Valley. The items run to four long pages and list objects valued as low as twenty cents. Naturally the larger items of real estate come first, but they are followed by such items as these: five hay forks at 25 cents each, a cod line 20 cents, a yarn winder 40 cents, two tenters at 50 cents each, and two cheese-hooks at 42 cents. Collectors of antiques will recognize such objects as a rocker iron, a clock reel, and a junk bottle. But what in the world is a squim? All I know is that it appears in the inventory of Dr. Ambrose Howard of Sidney, who among his many and varied ministrations put down most frequently the repeated charge, Operation Obstet \$3.00.

Chapter XII

HELL AND HIGH WATER

THE Devil and flood waters were the two evil demons feared by our ancestors who settled the valley of the Kennebec, and one was just as real as the other. The fear of hell and the fear of high water were mighty potent factors in life along our river a hundred and fifty years ago.

Sermons like "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" were common fare for the Kennebec settlers. Stern Calvinism was the predominant faith, and the fear that one had been foredoomed to damnation troubled many a conscientious soul. When liberal sects like the Universalists made their way into the valley, in the early years of the nineteenth century, they were reviled and denounced as themselves inventions of the Devil. More than one person was expelled from an evangelical church merely for the offense of "attending Universalist meeting."

It is true that the established church of New England, the church of the Cottons, the Mathers, and Jonathan Edwards, did not get a firm hold on the Kennebec Valley. The Boston theocracy had lost its grip a full half century before Fort Halifax was built. The church no longer controlled the daily affairs of its people and the political affairs of state. But the New England church did pass on to Central Maine two of its important factors—a theology of hell-fire and damnation, and the church tax.

The preaching was rugged stuff, as is revealed by the printed sermons of the time. Repent or burn in the eternal fires was the repeated theme. When the Universalist bell rang out "There ain't no hell," the bells of the other churches reverberated "The hell there ain't!" Revival meetings were just as emotional and just as protracted along the Kennebec as they were along the Sangamon when Abraham Lincoln and the Cary Grove gang used

to attend them for entertainment and excitement. The church exerted stern discipline, and strong men did not trifle with it.

As for the church tax, that was a matter of law. Even when the established church lost its stranglehold on New England life, it did not completely lose control of the civil community. The General Court of Massachusetts, as late as 1815, required all towns in the Commonwealth to provide religious instruction and to support it by public taxation.

Some of the towns in the District of Maine, far removed from the seat of government at Boston, were able to give scarcely more than lip service to the law, but their occasional compliance with it shows that the law was still recognized after the incorporation of Hallowell, Winslow and other Kennebec towns in 1771. Winslow, however, had evaded the law so frequently that, at least on two occasions, legal prosecution was threatened. In 1772 the town voted "to hire one month's preaching." In 1773 the town meeting decided to "hire Deliverance Smith to preach twelve Sundays during the year." On July 3, 1773, a man of the established church—Rev. John Murray, Congregational clergyman of Boothbay—held a service at Fort Halifax, when he baptized three children of John McKechnie, the man who made the survey of Waterville lots that has never been successfully contested. The next year saw an Episcopalian, Rev. Jacob Bailey, holding services at the Fort for several summer Sundays. Nevertheless in 1775 the town boldly voted "not to hire preaching."

Most of the Kennebec towns eventually built a public meeting house and employed a settled minister. Naturally occasional quarrels arose over his denominational affiliation and sometimes dissension became so bitter that separate churches were set up. For the most part, however, the town meeting house served not only as the center of the town's paid ministry, but was open to the use of all denominations. Such was the case with the first meeting house built in Waterville, which many years after its abandonment for preaching services, still stood back of the Waterville city hall, and until its demolition in 1950 was used as headquarters for the National Guard. In that old meeting house were heard the voices of Congregationalist, Baptist, Methodist and Episcopalian, but the voices that shouted loudest and won the greatest approval in the early years were those that gave stern admonitions about the fires of hell.

A town's contract with a settled clergyman was both legally and morally binding. This is evident by the way Winslow treated its first settled preacher, Joshua Cushman. In 1794 the town voted to employ him at 110 pounds a year. On June 10, 1795, he was ordained at a big open-air meeting on the Waterville side of the river. A veteran of Washington's army at Valley Forge, Cushman was a hardy character, who proved himself adept at politics as well as religion. A well educated man, a classmate of John Quincy Adams at Harvard, he became a recognized leader of the Winslow community, served in both branches of the Massachusetts legislature, was a member of Congress for three terms, and built up a kind of political machine that encompassed the whole District of Maine.

Joshua Cushman's political influence, however, did not keep him out of trouble with his parishioners. After the two meeting houses were built, one on each side of the river, it seems clear that when the minister satisfied one group he failed to satisfy the other. He was accused of leaning more and more toward Unitarian doctrine. In fact the articles of faith which the first Winslow church adopted under his leadership are said to have been the most liberal of any New England community before 1800. After the separation of Waterville from Winslow in 1802, Cushman continued to serve both communities, but in 1814 the people decided upon a change, and it was voted to "pay him \$1200 to preach to us no more." The church in which Mr. Cushman held his Winslow services for many years has the rare distinction of being the only meeting house on the Kennebec built at public expense in which religious services have been regularly held without interruption since 1795. Although several times renovated, the exterior of the structure remains much as originally built, and for many years it has housed the worship of the still flourishing Winslow Congregational church.

Sometimes there was resistance to the church tax in one or another of the Kennebec communities. Such an occasion made quite a stir in the town of Canaan. In a spirit of unusual liberality, the town meeting of 1796 had voted to exempt certain persons from the church tax. The town had hired an orthodox minister—that is, one of the established Congregational Church of Massachusetts—and laid a tax on every householder for his support. But it seems that a group of Baptists objected, saying they

wanted their own brand of preaching, were willing to pay for it, but not to pay for the orthodox preaching in addition. With unexpected tolerance the Canaan town meeting voted to exempt the Baptists from the tax.

Human nature being what it is, other persons began to say, "If they let the Baptists off, they'll have to let me off too." So many householders tried to hide behind those Baptist skirts that the town officers got truly alarmed. In November, 1797, ten of them as agents of the town signed a solemn petition to the Massachusetts legislature to force the recalcitrant citizens to pay the church tax.

The language of the petition reveals pretty clearly what had happened. It says:

In November, 1796, two persons in behalf of themselves and all those who had joined the Baptist Society, requested a discharge from the tax to support the town minister. On December 7, 1796, at a legal meeting of the inhabitants of the town of Canaan, it was voted to discharge those persons who had joined the Baptist Society from the present taxes for support of the Congregational minister, and for the future so long as they should attend the instruction of a teacher of piety, religion and morality of the Baptist denomination. When the town minister was called, a paper was drawn up and signed by a large number of the inhabitants, expressing their full approval of the minister called, and their willingness to give him a generous settlement and salary for his encouragement and support. A considerable number of those signers, observing the facility with which the Baptists had been discharged from paying the ministerial tax, proceeded to style themselves Baptists and now demand that they too be excused from paying the tax. But the inhabitants of the town of Canaan do conceive that the signing of the aforesaid paper warmly approving the settlement of the minister and specifically agreeing for his support ought to be so far binding on the subscribers as to oblige them to pay with others such sums as they have contracted, and that the right of conscience ought not to extend to release from a civil contract voluntarily made. Therefore your petitioners humbly pray that the persons who signed said paper may be left honestly and uprightly to fulfill the contract of their own making or that justice be done in any other way as the General Court shall determine.

The awful days of the Salem witchcraft were over before ministers were hired by our Kennebec towns. No hysterical girls accused some innocent man or woman of serving as the Devil's tool. No citizens of the Kennebec were hanged because they were convicted of being in league with Satan. But up and down the river, in meeting house after meeting house, the emotional sparks of verbal hell-fire and odors of imaginary brimstone constantly

reminded the people that the danger of hell was an ever-present reality.

Quite as immediate and even more material was the fear of high water. Every spring, and often at unexpected other seasons, Our Lady Kennebec went on one of her tantrums, and when she showed her anger, every inhabitant of the valley had to beware. Even when Our Lady smiled in the midst of her tantrum, her humor could scarcely be shared by those whose homes were washed away. Yet she did occasionally laugh in the midst of her wrath. There was, for instance, the Pumpkin Freshet of 1869. The oaks and the maples were ablaze with autumn colors and the harvested pumpkins had been piled up in the fields when the flood waters came. Miss Helen Louise Coburn, Skowhegan's talented historian, described the scene as she herself saw it as a girl:

I remember gazing down upon the torrent of the Kennebec below the railroad bridge, and watching it swing along on its foaming surface, a freight of golden balls. On the intervalles along the Sandy River and on the fields beside the Carrabasset the pumpkins had been gathered into heaps. All of them were carried off by the rising waters of the Kennebec, and on its surface they bobbed merrily along to the sea. It was probably the only time that Skowhegan youngsters literally went fishing for jack-o-lanterns.

Probably we shall never be able to determine which of two floods rose highest on the Kennebec. The two contenders occurred 104 years apart, in 1832 and 1936. Conditions along the river had changed radically during the intervening century. Building of dams held back large areas of water, but on the other hand persistent lumbering had denuded the banks, giving open sweep to many a converging stream.

Members of the present generation, who remember well the flood of 1936, are sure they witnessed the biggest rampage in which Our Lady Kennebec ever indulged. But none of this generation was around when the waters swept out houses and mills, bridges and dams, in 1832. Doubtless property damage was greater in 1936, because there was more property to destroy, but the water may have risen higher in 1832. Except to provide an argument, it doesn't matter much either way. Both floods were what we Maine folk call "hum-dingers."

Let us first recall that big freshet of only eighteen years ago. All day of Thursday, March 19, 1936, hundreds of Waterville citizens went frequently to the rear of buildings on lower Front

Street or to the slope back of the college buildings, to watch the rapidly rising waters. All the way from Richmond to The Forks, the inhabitants became increasingly alarmed. At Waterville many observers expected the railroad bridge to go out. Though weighted with flat cars loaded with stone, the piers themselves seemed to be giving way, as water gushed not around them, but through them. But the railroad bridge stood; it was the highway bridge—the Ticonic Bridge—that went out. Strangely enough, it did not carry with it the adjoining span of the electric railway bridge. That abandoned structure, originally built for the electric car tracks, proved an unexpected blessing during the tedious wait for a new highway bridge; it permitted one-way traffic until the new span was opened.

The 1936 flood destroyed \$20,000,000 of property and rendered 8,000 people homeless. Winslow's gas lines and household water were cut off; water stood five feet deep in the business district of Gardiner; the town of Bingham was completely surrounded; the fear of epidemic added to people's anxiety. Dozens of bridges were swept away, scores of broken dams on the main river and its tributaries let loose impounded waters.

In that spring of 1936 Our Lady was indeed playing tricks. Wednesday, March 11, saw a heavy blanket of snow over the whole state. That evening it began to rain, and continued in such downpour all day Thursday that roads began to be flooded and there were many washouts. On Friday the Kennebec rose more than a foot an hour. A dangerous ice jam formed at Vassalboro. On Friday, although it had stopped raining, the waters continued to rise and the highway bridge at Richmond went out. By nightfall the whole valley between Richmond and Augusta was isolated.

Then came relief. Sunday was fair and much warmer. The water began to recede. The flood was apparently over, and people set to work to repair the damage. No one paid much attention when intermittent showers fell on Monday. But when fog accompanied more showers on Tuesday and the weather reports forecast heavy rain, people again became alarmed. Their fears were justified. All day Wednesday torrents of rain continued to fall. On Thursday morning it was still raining, and the high temperature was loosening the up-river ice. It was that loosened

ice which did the greatest damage. Few things, even bridge abutments, that got in its path could withstand the onslaught. A month after that wild night of March 19, huge ice cakes, capable of supporting a house, could still be seen on the west side of the Arnold Trail highway above Fairfield.

For the most authentic record of the great freshet of 1832 we are indebted to Timothy Otis Paine, who made a systematic study of flood records at Waterville and Winslow from 1761 to 1890. Mr. Paine had been born in 1824 at a house on the hill above the Sebec near Fort Halifax. He lived there until 1856, when he went to Massachusetts. In 1891 he was employed by Engineer H. F. Mills, on behalf of the Hollingsworth and Whitney Company, to visit his old home in Maine, go among the aged farmers along the Kennebec from Winslow to Fairfield, and with his own knowledge of Kennebec freshets fix as many high-water marks as possible.

Mr. Paine's carefully preserved notes clearly show that Winslow was a good place to study the high waters. He wrote: "When Moosehead Lake sends out a great freshet, Winslow at the Fort catches it; it comes into the stores and dwellings on the lowland. For this reason there have always been many high-water marks at the village. Waterville, on higher ground, has poorer flood records than the mother town of Winslow."

When he had finished his investigation, Mr. Paine was sure that the flood of 1832 was the worst ever experienced between 1761 and 1890. The 1832 freshet was the one by which people throughout the following years measured every rise of water. Mr. Paine himself recalled that in his boyhood, he often heard people say that the freshet of any year came within so many feet or inches of the freshet of 1832. Furthermore, Paine himself could remember that famous freshet. Eight years old when it occurred, he had stood at the living room window of his home and had watched the waters reach their height. He saw them rise over the lowlands around what is now Lithgow Street, where church and grange hall stand, then creep up slowly to the foot of the hill.

At the same time another boy of fourteen, Winslow Simpson, was watching the flood as it swept over the flat where the Hollingsworth and Whitney mill now stands. Still living in 1891, Simpson fixed the highwater mark of 1832 by a sawdust line left

by the waters in the graveyard on the flats across the river from Colby College. Mr. Paine accepted that mark as authentic, when he made his investigations in 1891. He explains why: "The sawdust and drift line of a freshet is made by nature herself. It is a contour line admitted into the courts of the world, and may be seen and traced for many years."

The 1832 freshet occurred late in the spring, the waters reaching their height on May 22. Unlike the 1936 flood, this one was not accompanied by ice. With no ice jams to collect and suddenly give way, what accounted for rise of water so much higher than in other floods for more than a century? For many years rumor persisted that the dam at the foot of Moosehead Lake had given way, but that its builders had kept silent through fear of having to pay damages. Mr. Paine's investigation spiked that rumor, for he proved conclusively that no dam existed at the foot of Moosehead as early as 1832. Walter Getchell, a very old man when Paine talked with him in 1891, had his own theory about the 1832 flood. He said a northeast wind blew continuously for fifteen days, and not one of those days was without rain. That relentlessly unceasing wind, said Getchell, had blown vast quantities of water out of Moosehead Lake and made the flow down the river excessively high. That explanation did not satisfy Mr. Paine, but it was some time before he hit upon a satisfactory solution.

Paine finally declared that the unusual height of the flood was caused by extraordinary obstruction of the waters. When flood waters encounter any natural obstruction, they pile up the logs, trees, and floating debris into something very like a dam, which holds back the top water into a rapidly filling pond. Logs that came down the river in 1832 were not only long lumber, they were also of a diameter almost unbelievable today. Many were the huge, virgin pines, six to eight feet through, big and strong enough to jam into a hopeless snarl everything that they caught when they became snagged between abutment and pier of a bridge or by any natural obstruction. When finally the water rises high enough to force the whole collected mass to give way, a great volume of driftwood pushes on down the river in the van of a huge wall of water. A few miles above Waterville and Winslow the Kennebec offers a prominent natural obstruction in the form of Bunker Island. What happened in the 1832 flood

was this. At sundown on May 21 the Kennebec was alive with moving masses of logs, washed-out bridges, buildings, uprooted trees, and all sorts of floating wreckage. Bunker Island and the piers and abutments of the three bridges between Fairfield and Benton halted this mass so that some of it formed like a huge raft in the naturally made pond. Soon after midnight the whole mass let loose and plunged down the river. From Fairfield to Ticonic Falls the Kennebec became a series of log and rubbish ponds, at first held back, then let loose, so that no sooner had the increased flow from one release moved up the banks than another and another and another would send the rising water higher still. That situation made the 1832 flood the highest in a hundred years.

When Paine made his studies in 1891, Winslow's famous freshet oak was still standing, at a distance which Paine carefully measured as 363 feet below Ticonic Bridge. As late as 1942, H. B. Pratt, Jr., and L. A. Fitch noted that the tree had recently been cut down, showing that it stood many years after Paine's observations. When Pratt and Fitch examined the stump, they found the annular rings so distinct that they could easily count 183 of them. The freshet oak, therefore, must have been standing as a young tree when Winslow was incorporated as a town in 1771. The freshet oak, very much alive when Paine closely observed it in 1891, revealed interesting information. Logs carried by flood waters had rubbed off its bark at various heights. On one side of the tree was a deep gash, shaped like a new moon. Several people told Paine the gash was made in the freshet of 1869. Paine found no other scar on the tree higher than that new moon, except one. That single exception was fully a foot higher up the tree. It was the scar made by the champion of all Kennebec floods in 1832. Charles Getchell of Winslow accompanied Mr. Paine to the freshet oak, pointed to the highest scar and said: "The '32 freshet was up there. Mr. William Redington asked my father to show him how high the water came. Where father showed him the place on this tree, Mr. Redington painted a red mark. I was then ten years old, and I could just reach Mr. Redington's mark."

One of Winslow's famous landmarks was Bassett's store. Only a few years ago it was moved several rods south to make room for a gasoline station at the corner of Lithgow Street and

the Augusta road, at the south end of the Seabasticook Bridge. The store formerly stood nearer the bridge, right at the corner. Squire Josiah Bassett, who was not old enough to remember the 1832 flood, but who had carefully kept the family records about it, told Mr. Paine: "The 1887 freshet landed big logs in the field back of my store. Water came up to within twenty feet of the northeast corner of the building. That was the highest I ever saw, but I feel sure the 1832 flood touched the floor of this store." On lower ground, east of the Bassett store, where another filling station now stands, once stood a cooper shop, in which the Winslow post office was located. That shop and post office were conducted by Josiah Bassett's father. When Josiah was a boy, he had frequently seen his father call attention to a high water mark cut on the old-time post office partition in the shop, about eighteen inches above the floor. Another Winslow landmark was the Eaton store, at the head of what was known as Eaton's landing, near where the railroad bridge now touches the Winslow side of the Seabasticook. This was a two-story building with a four-sided roof. Josiah Bassett, when a small boy, had heard Mr. Eaton say that, in the 1832 flood, a canoe entered his store and its bow shot over the counter.

One amazing feature of '32 freshet concerned a flock of sheep. They grazed on the lower end of the flat just above the Pond Hole, near where the Hollingsworth and Whitney original mill now stands. At night those sheep slept under an old flat boat turned bottom up. Without leaving the flat, that whole flock survived the flood. Since there is no deep depression near the H & W mills, and none is ever known to have been there, what was the Pond Hole? Mr. Paine came upon a curious explanation. "The word hole often meant simply a very bad place. It had that meaning to the translators of the King James Bible, who phrased a verse in the eighth chapter of Ezekiel thus: 'He brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, I beheld a hole. Then he said to me, Son of Man, go in and see the wicked abominations that they do here.' " Paine says that was just the kind of place he found in what the Winslow inhabitants called Pond Hole. "I found my walk up through the Pond Hole extremely difficult. The place was cluttered, clogged and tangled, full of trees, rocks, bushes and all sorts of trash—a very hole of a place."

Winslow Simpson assured Mr. Paine that the river rose twenty-six feet in twelve hours in the great freshet of 1832. Mr. Simpson's father, who lived to be 104 years old, used to keep a record of all freshets by marks on a cedar tree at the foot of Simpson's Landing. A large limb shot out horizontally from its main trunk. No flood ever recorded by the elder Simpson quite reached that limb except the freshet of 1832. The mark which Simpson placed on the tree for that year's high water was well above the limb.

Mr. Paine was a competent, engineering investigator. As a scientist, he was careful to sift his evidence. The more he talked with old inhabitants, the more he became certain that some of the stories about the 1832 flood were greatly exaggerated. He concluded that, while the flood was probably the highest of which there was any record between 1761 and 1890, it actually did not rise much higher than many other freshets. Paine had done his work so thoroughly that finally he was able to write:

In Nathaniel Dingley's front yard, and between the Winslow post office and the railroad bridge, I can stand, and on my own body mark off, with considerable accuracy, all the freshets since 1761. No freshet can I call great unless it wets my feet, as I stand inside Mr. Dingley's gate. Some freshets in the '30s and '40s would then come to my knees, the great flood of '32 coming a little higher, but not more than half way to my hips. When I was a boy, I used to be disgusted with a freshet that was a few inches lower than the last.

The writer of this volume is no expert on floods, but he would venture one bit of evidence to show that the 1936 freshet, in our own time, was actually the Kennebec's record breaker, higher even than the 1832 flood. The Waterville *Sentinel* published a photograph, looking west down Lithgow Street past the Bassett house. The whole area is completely flooded. No street can be seen at all, and the water comes up to the sill of the northeast window on the first floor of that big house. Now, among the other things which Josiah Bassett had told Mr. Paine was the information that no flood had ever covered the floor of the old Bassett house, but that in 1832 the water came to the under side of the floor beams. The 1936 photograph shows clearly that the water came well up over the floor.

Another Kennebec flood which people still living remember well occurred in 1901. The Waterville *Mail* called it the worst

since 1832. If we consider the 1936 flood the worst and most devastating and concede second place to that of 1832, probably the freshet of 1901 holds third place, greater even than the admittedly big deluge of 1869. Pictures of the 1901 flood show Waterville houses at the Head of the Falls halfway submerged, reveal a building near the junction of the Sebasticook and Kennebec with only the roof out of water, and depict the covered bridge over the Sebasticook with the roadway completely under water and the waves washing over the flooring of the bridge. The 1901 flood was unusual in that it came not in the spring nor even, like the Pumpkin Freshet, in mid-autumn. It came after winter had truly set in, reaching its height on December 16. On the thirteenth—a fateful Friday the thirteenth it proved to be—the weather turned unseasonably warm. All day Saturday the snow melted fast, and there was a lot of it, because since Thanksgiving the snow storms had been frequent. On Saturday night it began to rain, and for forty-eight hours a drenching downpour continued. The river rose suddenly and rapidly. Mr. S. I. Abbott of the Lockwood Mills said that the deepest water he had previously seen over the dam, in his twenty-six years with the company, was thirteen feet, but on the morning of December 16, 1901, he measured fifteen feet. The oldest residents declared that the island near the bridge was never so deeply under water since 1832.

The night of December 15 had seen the damage begin. The Ticonic footbridge, built from the foot of Waterville's Temple Street to the Winslow side near the mills, was carried away. At daylight the approach from the foot of Temple Street to the toll house was still intact, but by eight o'clock the toll house itself moved off down the river. It started right side up and moved along in dignified manner until it reached the railroad bridge. The floor of that bridge acted like a knife to cut the roof off the floating toll house so that by the time it reached the Ticonic dam it was a complete wreck.

By Monday noon the dam at the canal, where water was diverted to the Lockwood cotton mill, had been severely damaged, and the entire Lockwood plant had to shut down. In even worse condition was the Hollingsworth and Whitney paper mill, for the water had invaded their buildings in such volume that all work had to be stopped for two weeks. As for householders

along the river, the Waterville *Mail* said on December 16: "The residents at the Head of the Falls are suffering even more than they usually do when a freshet comes. People living on the river bank began moving to higher ground last evening. Before the foot bridge collapsed, some of the tenements were already in danger, and this forenoon two or three feet of water stood on the ground floor of most of them. One house was entirely surrounded by water several feet deep. It was fastened by a stout rope to a tree a rod or two up the river bank, though the tree stood as deep in water as did the house."

Between Pleasant and Burleigh streets in Waterville, just west of the business section, is an ancient depression called "the gully." Down it, a hundred years ago, flowed a stream called the Hayden Brook, on the bed of which was later laid an early sewer line, so that what Waterville children call "the gully" their elders called the Hayden Brook sewer. Since 1900 that gully has been partially filled in and it is comparatively unaffected when flood waters hit the Kennebec. But, in the freshet of 1901, people living near the gully knew there was a flood. Early on Sunday afternoon, in that December week, water began flowing into some of the houses in the district. Culverts were wholly inadequate. Washouts resulted at nearly all of the intersections where streets crossed the gully. Water rose far up the banks, even in the steepest sections. Perhaps not since 1832 had the old gully seen so much water, but if the gully could be personified with a memory it could tell stories of much wilder raging waters. Geologically that gully was once the main bed of the Kennebec river. In those long ago years before any white man saw the region, perhaps even before the Abnaki braves marked their trails along its banks, flood waters from Moosehead raged through what is now a populous residential section of Waterville. Although fast filling up, there is enough of the gully left between Burleigh Street and Western Avenue to remind the modern dweller that here, centuries ago, Our Lady Kennebec went on such a mad rampage that she actually changed her bed and has never gone back to the old one.

The Messalonskee, as well as the Kennebec, felt the raging waters of 1901. The floor of the Gilman Street bridge was overflowed and a crew of men worked all night to keep the abutments from being washed out. On the Sebecook, the well-known high

water mark on the Bassett store was covered. The store itself was entirely surrounded and could be reached only by boat. The covered bridge over the Sebesticook was moved from its foundations, but did not go out. Cars loaded with scrap iron held the two railroad bridges. Out of the yards of the Reynolds sawmill in Winslow floated 300,000 feet of lumber. Communication was completely disrupted. Washouts prevented highway travel; water backing into the power plants put out all lights and stopped the street car service. For three days not a train came into Waterville from any direction and for a week the city had no telephone connection with outside communities.

What the 1901 flood did to Waterville is strikingly revealed by the issue of the *Waterville Mail* for December 16. The *Mail* was an evening paper, of full newspaper size, usually of eight to twelve pages. That flood issue of December 16, 1901, was a little four-page sheet 11 by 8½ inches. It contained not a single advertisement, and was devoted entirely to news about the flood. The editors gave on the first page their explanation.

This morning we gave up all idea of getting out an issue today. The electric company informed us that they were practically dead to the world and would not be able to turn a wheel before Tuesday, perhaps much later. Finally the largest job press in our office was rigged up for foot power, and we decided to publish a paper in abbreviated form. It will be noted that it contains no advertising at all. For that omission we ask the indulgence of our advertisers. We hope to get out a regular edition tomorrow, but we make no promise about it.

High water sometimes interfered with the religious attacks on hell. More than once Elder Cushman was prevented from crossing the river for Sabbath meeting. On one occasion an unexpected freshet made the North Fairfield Quakers turn back from their journey to Vassalboro meeting. In the 1830's Rev. Samuel Francis Smith, author of the national hymn *America*, couldn't get back from Ten Lots for his evening service at Waterville's First Baptist Church because the Messalonskee had overflowed.

Usually, however, there was no antagonism between the two forces which harrassed the lives of old timers in the Kennebec Valley. When they weren't listening to hell-fire sermons they were quite as likely to be contending with devastating floods. Folks in our valley spent a lot of time between hell and high water.

Chapter XIII

FROZEN GOLD

ON a New Haven railroad train in the 1880's a New York man fell into conversation with a man from Gardiner, Maine. "I've been down there on the Kennebec," said the New Yorker, "and I've often wondered how you Gardiner folks get a living. Hallowell has its big granite quarries, Augusta is the state capital, but how do you people in Gardiner pay your bills?"

"Well, I'll tell you," drawled the Maine man, "we get along all right. Our little factories don't hire many men, but they all help. Our shippin' ain't what it used to be, when Gardiner men owned and operated more ships than any other port on the river, except Bath. We pick up a lot of odd cents one way or another, but when it comes right down to it, I s'pose we pay our bills with frozen gold."

The first record of a shipment of frozen gold from the Kennebec concerns the city of Gardiner, for in 1824 the brig *Orion* of that town was loaded with floating ice in the early spring and sailed for Baltimore as soon as the river was fully open to navigation. In the Maryland city that cargo of ice sold for \$700. When a product provided by nature itself could be so easily turned into cash, it took no great stretch of metaphor to call that product frozen gold.

The romantic side of the industry has been preserved for posterity in the poetic prose of Robert Coffin in his *Kennebec, Cradle of Americans*. Telling how the farmers, with their sons and their horses, gathered from all the lower Kennebec towns and from far into their hinterland, Dr. Coffin continues:

Here you could reckon on a man's property in solid, tangible things, as in the days of Jacob and Laban. The richest man was one who had nine or ten strong men to follow the swing of his creasing trousers in ringing, ironed shoes. Or three or four spans of horses with the morning star in their foreheads and the music of steel under their feet. So the wealth of the Kennebec came down to the harvest of Maine's best winter crop in the eighties.

It was indeed a romantic industry. My first sight of it was in the winter of 1909-10, when I was a freshman at Colby College. I had seen ice harvested on Highland Lake in Bridgton and put into the little ice houses on its shore, but that was toy work compared with the Kennebec harvest. It was certainly a thrilling spectacle to see several hundred men out on the ice in section after section between Hallowell and Richmond; to watch the gougers marking the field, the saws worked by strong arms cutting the blocks, the picks guiding the big cakes through the open canals, the chains and hooks hauling the cakes up the run-ways into the huge ice houses. But romantic and spectacular as any stranger might find it, the practical economy was what appealed to the inhabitants of the Kennebec.

From time of the early settlements Maine had enjoyed one prominent winter crop—lumber. Trees cut down in the winter provided the long logs that came down the Kennebec on the spring waters and supplied the hundreds of saw mills along the banks. That winter crop was profitable, but it was harvested only by the hardest kind of labor over many weeks, and as time went on, the lumbermen had to go deeper and deeper into the big woods, far from the towns.

Kennebec ice, on the contrary, was to be had right at home. No artificial restoration was necessary, no waiting for twenty years for another crop to grow. The crop demanded neither seeds nor fertilizer; it just grew year after year. Its yield depended only on tricks of the weather. If the winter stayed warm or had too frequent thaws, the ice was thin and spongy; if there was a long spell of intense cold, it was thick and hard. But, in some condition and some quality, it came every winter. It was the Kennebec's cheapest and most available winter crop.

Somehow, whether deserved or just promoted by good advertising, Kennebec ice got the reputation of being the purest in the markets of the world. When we note the present-day appearance of the river, though we still contend it is not so offensive as the Androscoggin, we wonder how its ice could ever have been considered pure. We can only conjecture that the chemical wastes now poured into the river from the big factories and the sewage from the growing cities had not then so badly polluted the stream.

Just how far the Kennebec ice travelled in those boom years of the industry from 1840 to 1900, no one can accurately say. Dr. Coffin may be right in his casual reference to cargoes of it going around Cape Horn. We have been unable to find any authentic reference to such a voyage. Perhaps loads of it went even to Calcutta, the destination (as Thoreau contended in *Walden*) of some of the ice from Walden Pond. We do know that ice from the Kennebec found its way into julep glasses at Savannah and the punch bowls at Port au Prince, that the feudal planters on Jamaica used a lot of it, and that the Royal Bank of Canada on the island of Trinidad had a regular contract for summer supply. Doubtless occasional cargoes of ice from Hallowell or Gardiner or Richmond crossed the Atlantic to Mediterranean ports, and it is quite possible that it went to other parts of Europe and Africa.

By far the greater part of each winter's crop, however, went to our own Atlantic cities—to New York and Philadelphia, to Baltimore and Washington, to Norfolk and Richmond, to Charleston and Savannah. By 1880, the biggest operator was the Knickerbocker Ice Company, which had wholesale and retail outlets in a dozen major cities and which owned some of the biggest storage facilities on the Kennebec. It was in the ice business that the banker and financier, Charles Morse, accumulated the start of his considerable fortune.

After that experimental voyage of the *Orion* in 1824, the business developed fast. In 1826, Rufus Page of Gardiner put up in that town a building capable of storing 1500 tons of ice. Page filled the house with thick, solid ice. About the same time the Tudors of Boston, who had exclusive control of the ice trade with the British West Indies, built another ice house at Gardiner. Page arranged with the Tudors to transport his ice along with theirs. For some reason the market was not good, the venture failed, and Page had to turn his ice house over to the Tudors to pay his debts.

In 1832 the Tudors built a 3000 ton ice house at Gardiner, almost exactly where the bridge head now stands, and thereafter the industry grew fast. Ice houses sprang up at Pittston, South Gardiner and Farmingdale. It was not until 1867, however, that the first modern ice house was built on the Kennebec. This was at Pittston, where the Kennebec Land and Lumber Company

erected a building with a capacity of 10,000 tons. Five years later a well established distributor known as the Independent Ice Company of Washington, D. C., built several houses at Pittston. One of the largest locally owned firms was the Haynes and DeWitt Ice Company, of which the head was J. Manchester Haynes of Augusta.

In 1896 the Gardiner Board of Trade, to promote industrial and business interests in the community, published an illustrated booklet with the title *Picturesque Gardiner*. This volume contains some excellent pictures of the harvesting, storage and shipping of Kennebec ice. There is a full-page scene of ice-cutting in front of the huge Knickerbocker plant at Gardiner; there are fascinating photographs of the trim, fast three-masted and four-masted vessels that carried the ice to distant ports. One view depicts the gigantic plant of the Cockran-Oler Company, with its almost unbelievable capacity of 175,000 tons. Altogether the booklet shows pictures of the ice houses and ships of six companies, whose combined annual output came to 600,000 tons. By way of boosting the town, the volume declared:

Today (1896) the largest and most convenient ice houses in the world line both banks of the river, with a total storage of 1,500,000 tons. More than a third of this capacity is at Gardiner and Randolph. The average harvest, compared with the *Orion's* first cargo of \$700 in 1824, is now \$2,000,000.

Still preserved is a valuable record of the ice industry—a chart of all the ice houses on the Kennebec in 1882. It bears the heading: Issued by T. B. Chase and Sons, Dealers and Brokers in Ice, 51 Commercial Street, Boston, and Gardiner, Maine, 1882." On the left side of the chart is a map of the Kennebec river from the Augusta dam to Bath, showing boat canals, position of buoys, depth of water, and the position, capacity and ownership of all ice houses. In the lower left hand corner is a list of tow boats on the river—the little steam craft that towed the big sailing vessels to the ice ports. Nine of those boats were owned by the Knickerbocker Ice Company and two by the Kennebec Company.

It was this chart which settled a dispute about the Knickerbocker Ice Company. When, on a radio program, I once referred to the Knickerbocker Ice Company of New York, several listeners took me to task. They admitted that, historically, the name Knickerbocker ought to be associated with New York, but

they were very sure that the Knickerbocker Ice Company was a Philadelphia concern. One man told me he had, as a boy, often chased Knickerbocker teams through Philadelphia streets, to get small chips of ice, the way children used to do in every town.

The 1882 chart makes it clear that there were two Knickerbocker companies, or perhaps two branches of the same company. The Knickerbocker Ice Company of New York was by that time the smaller company, so far as its Kennebec houses were concerned, having only two with a combined capacity of 58,000 tons. The larger producer and distributor was called the Philadelphia Knickerbocker Company, and had six big houses with a total capacity of 188,000 tons. This Philadelphia company boasted one of the largest houses on the river, at Pittston, where 65,000 tons of ice could be stored under one roof. It took several different houses to store the 175,000 tons of Cochran-Oler, to which reference has previously been made. But the Philadelphia Knickerbocker house at Pittston, for all its 65,000 tons, was not the Kennebec's largest. That honor went to the ice house of Abram Rich at Farmingdale, where winter after winter Rich put up 80,000 tons. Haynes and DeWitt, the biggest of the local interests, had a house for 62,000 tons at Richmond, and the Baltimore firm of Ober and Son had a 50,000 ton house at the same place.

Altogether, between the Augusta dam and Bath, the chart shows 41 ice houses commercially operating in 1882. Those 41 were in addition to the numerous small houses used to store ice for local use. Although the Philadelphia Knickerbocker Company was by far the largest operator, not to be scoffed at were the four big houses of Russell Brothers on both sides of the river at Richmond and Dresden. At Pittston centered Washington interests, with the Great Falls and the Independence companies, both with headquarters in the national capital, accounting for 100,000 tons a year.

Among those giants, controlled from the big cities, local operators like Haynes and DeWitt strove valiantly for what was left of the holdings which, until after the Civil War, had been almost entirely in neighborhood hands. The Kennebec Ice Company, owned by Gardiner and Augusta interests, still had big houses at Richmond and Pittston as late as 1882. Even some of

the small operators hung on tenaciously. G. E. Weeks, with a house just below the Augusta dam, stored a mere 2,000 tons. The White Brothers put up 5,000 tons at Farmingdale. George Brown, down near Merrymeeting Bay, rated a listing on the chart with 2,000 tons, while the smallest commercial ice house of all stored Thompson Brothers' 1,500 tons opposite Swan Island.

Thanks to this chart, we know that Kennebec ice held the record for all ice exported from Maine waters. On the right side of the chart are listed the names and capacity of commercial ice houses on the Penobscot and Cathance rivers, and at ports along the coast from Biddeford to Vinalhaven. On the Penobscot were fifteen companies, storing and shipping in 1882 a total of 146,000 tons. On the Cathance river were twelve companies with 39,000 tons. Along the coast were 34 companies turning out 349,800 tons. That made a total of a little more than half a million tons of ice exported by all of Maine, except the Kennebec. From the Kennebec ports alone, in 1882, the ships carried 1,563,000 tons, three times as much as all other Maine ports housed and shipped. A million and a half tons is a lot of ice. It sold for a sizeable sum of money. No wonder they called it frozen gold.

The Kennebec's chief competitor was the Hudson, and the icemen of our Maine river watched the New York weather reports after Christmas almost as avidly as they watched the local forecasts. When, by one of those rare freaks of weather, thaws struck the Hudson valley while below zero cold held on the Kennebec, the faces of our Maine ice operators were spread with smiles. The news meant soft and spongy ice on the Hudson; sound, thick, solid, saleable ice on the Kennebec. The Knickerbocker Company, owning plants on both rivers, didn't care where its ice came from, so long as it got a good harvest. The right harvest conditions on the Kennebec simply meant several weeks of well paid employment for every able-bodied man or grown boy for many miles along the river. The big companies with their absentee ownership made plenty of money, but some of it stayed behind in the form of wages and purchase of local supplies. In those winters of seventy to eighty years ago, the Kennebec farmers and tradesmen watched the reports from the Hudson just as carefully as Aroostook people today follow the reports of Idaho potatoes.

Ingenious men sometimes went to a lot of trouble to keep up with the competition in ice. Such a man was Captain Eben D. Haley of Gardiner. Tropical ports needed ice the year round, in January as well as July. What the Kennebec needed and did not have were ice houses built where vessels could load at any time of the year. Captain Haley conceived the bold plan of cutting off an arm of the sea with a dam, then compel the water to leave the cove and return to the sea. He secured an act of legislature permitting him to build across Campbell's cove at Boothbay Harbor. The way Kingsbury tells it in his *History of Kennebec County*, Captain Haley constructed two complete dams of timber cribs filled with stone, forming two parallel walls eleven feet apart. Into this compartment gravel was dumped until the water was forced out, thus forming a solid road bed. Near the point of low tide Haley placed a spout 28 inches square through both dams and roadway. By a mere device of opening a gate in the spout at low tide, the water from the pond sought its level on the sea side of the dam, and it could enter the pipe only at its opening at the bottom of the deepest water. Kingsbury says that the result surprised the captain himself, for in fifty-four days the pipe was discharging only fresh water, with which land streams had entirely replaced the ocean flow. Captain Haley's scheme made it possible to cut ice in Campbells Cove in 1881 and every subsequent winter as long as demand continued for the product. From it ice could be loaded on ships in any month of the year.

Winter after winter ice still forms on the Kennebec, but the sounds of gouger and saw, of shouting men and tugging teams, are no longer heard. The ice houses from Augusta to Bowdoinham have fallen into decay. Even the Maine Central's whistle stop called Iceboro has disappeared. Just as the iron horse put an end to the canals, just as the automobile abolished the trolley lines and spelled the doom of the narrow gauge railroads, so did electric refrigeration close the era of world-wide business in Kennebec ice. The crystals that now cool a Savannah julep come out of the freezing compartment in an electric box. But there are folks still living who can recall those days, sixty or seventy years ago, when all the way from New York to Key West, the crystals that cooled food and drink, that made ice packs for the sick, that preserved meat and vegetables and fruits, were chunks of frozen gold from the Kennebec.

Chapter XIV

WHITE SAILS AND SMOKING STACKS

ON a warm August day in 1848, farmers' families from miles around assembled at Getchell's Corner, now the village of Vassalboro. Just as, a half-century later, every householder who owned a horse and any wheeled vehicle packed in his wife and offspring and took them all to the county fair, so in 1848 every householder found some way to get his whole family to the scene of any unusual event. Weeks earlier, word had penetrated to the remote hamlets at Albion and Palermo, at Mt. Vernon and Vienna, up the river to Bingham and down the river to Swan Island. To the question, "What's going on up to Getchell's Corner?" settlers got the answer, "John Lang's launching a brig." That was indeed something to see—a vessel, built and rigged right there at Getchell's Corner, not launched unfinished, to be rigged for sea down the river at Gardiner or Hallowell. "No, sir," said Squire Brown of Brown's Corner (Riverside) when he told his friends down at the State House about it, "That brig will go right from Getchell's Corner to Africa. She'll be rigged when she leaves John Lang's wharf."

The Kennebec folk who made a gala day of that launching did not know that they were seeing the only ocean going ship ever to be built at Vassalboro. It was enough for them to know that she was a big vessel and was going overseas, that on her was not only their neighbor, Captain Gustavus Dickman, but farm boys from all up and down the valley to make up his crew. The spectators that day had more than curiosity to bring them to the launching of the *Ocean Bird*.

Captain Gustavus, like all good ship masters of his day, stood for no foolishness and no lapses of discipline. In the articles of agreement, by which the crew signed on, he took precautions against trouble. One article read: "It is agreed between

the master, seamen or mariners of the brig *Ocean Bird* of Vassalboro, whereof Gustavus Dickman is the present master, now bound from the Port of New York to the mouth of the Zambia River in Africa, from thence on a general freighting and trading voyage of the term of six calendar months—that no sheath knives or profane language shall be allowed on board.”

The second mate got wages of twenty dollars a month, the ordinary seamen fifteen dollars. On the return voyage the log showed that a Negro boy agreed to serve on the *Ocean Bird* for one year at a monthly wage of twenty-five cents. Such wages were common enough at the time, but what was uncommon was part of the ship's return cargo. She brought 8,000 bushels of a new product to the United States, for on board the *Ocean Bird*, as she sailed into New York, were the first peanuts ever brought to this country.

As in every other part of the world, water made the natural highway for man on the Kennebec. Before the white man came, the Abnakis had floated their bark canoes down its tumbling waters. Early in the seventeenth century, the Kennebec had seen the sails of Weymouth and Captain John Smith. It had welcomed the boats of the Pilgrim traders, the Jesuit missionaries, and the French voyageurs. In time the river became the natural avenue of commerce and saw many kinds of craft go up and down its stream.

One of the most unique of those craft was the “longboat,” a vessel especially designed for traffic on the Kennebec. It was such a vessel that Mrs. Jeremiah Chaplin encountered when she journeyed to Waterville in company with her clergyman husband on his way to become the first president of the Maine Literary and Theological Institution (now Colby College) at Waterville in 1818. Mrs. Chaplin gives a vivid description of her experience:

On Wednesday afternoon, June 24, we left Hallowell and took one of those longboats which are much used on the Kennebec, and which, being made with a booth at one end, are very convenient for the transportation of families as well as goods. Part of the time we could easily have stepped from the boat to the shore, the distance was so small. Sometimes, when the wind was unfavorable, it was found necessary for the crew to go on shore and procure oxen, who, standing on the water's edge with a rope fastened to them, must assist its motion. We went along with their assistance, but

as the wind was several times faint and weak, the men took the rope and helped us along. A boat with two men and two women in it were quite near us for a considerable time. Once they were so near that one of the women pleasantly offered us a pinch of snuff. Night beginning to draw the curtain of darkness around us, when we were still three or four miles from Waterville, we went ashore and found lodging with a family. Early the next morning we proceeded to Waterville.

Many Colby graduates have read this account of Mrs. Chaplin's in Dr. Edwin Whittemore's *History of Colby College*, but I suspect none of them has seen anything remarkable in the story. But there is something that gives us pause for thought. Mrs. Chaplin makes it clear that it was the same longboat that took them all the way from Hallowell to Waterville. How did that boat get around the rapids at Augusta? Not until nearly twenty years later were the Augusta dam and its passing canal constructed. Furthermore, a longboat was no tiny craft. That sort of vessel wasn't portaged around falls and rapids. The average longboat was from 60 to 100 feet long and 15 to 20 feet wide. It was especially designed for transporting heavy freight, but fitted, as Mrs. Chaplin indicates, with comfortable quarters for passengers. One commentator says that most longboats had two masts that could be lowered going under bridges, had square sails, and definitely were not propelled by oars. These big craft went down river easily enough with the current, but they could return only with a good south wind. That is why Mrs. Chaplin speaks of the delay and the need of oxen and men, with ropes, to pull the boat along the shore, as she inched her way up stream. Nevertheless, from plenty of evidence besides Mrs. Chaplin's diary, we know that these big boats did go right up past Augusta before the dam was built. Of course no boat as heavy as a longboat got up through the rapids by her own sail power. Here the inevitable oxen had to help. With several strong yoke at the end of the tow rope, any good longboat could get through. That must have been the way Mrs. Chaplin came up the Old Coon rapids in 1818.

Not every longboat got through unscathed. In 1826 Mathews and Gilman built at Waterville the *Eagle*, one of the biggest longboats ever launched, a vessel of over a hundred tons. They loaded her with wheat, which they sold at various landings down the river, then reloaded her with a hundred hogsheads of salt at Bath and started up the river for home. All went well until they

reached the foot of the rapids at Augusta. There they hitched on the oxen and pushed confidently up the rips. Somehow the tow line became slack and the current swung the big boat with such force against the rocks that it broke completely in two. Some of the cargo was later recovered, but the *Eagle* was, as the historian Kingsbury puts it, "a dead bird."

Forts Halifax and Western were scarcely forty years old when shipping had become fairly regular on the Kennebec. In 1794 the sloop *Courier* was making frequent trips from Hallowell to Boston, and two years later George Crosby was running the *Kennebec Packet* on as regular a schedule to Boston as weather would permit. In a bad storm in 1814, two packet boats bound for Boston got into trouble. The *Catherine*, out of Augusta, was dismasted and the *Kennebec Trader* from Gardiner lost overboard her first mate.

In 1824 Augusta interests opened the Traders' Line, with three schooners plying regularly between Augusta and Boston, but not until 1831 was time regularly advertised between the two ports. Apparently none of those early ships could go above Augusta until after the canal was built. The *New England Gazetteer*, published in Boston by John Hayward in 1839, says in its account of Waterville: "From Augusta, the head of sloop navigation, goods are transported to Waterville in longboats, some of which carry as much as forty tons. This renders the place an import depot of merchandise for an extensive country above, and of produce the manufactures brought down to be shipped to market."

Although the *Ocean Bird* was the only big ship built at Vassalboro, hundreds of others were built at various yards on the Kennebec above Bath. As early as 1774 Thomas Argy built a sloop at Pittston and in the years from 1784 to 1826 Argy's three sons, Thomas, John and David, built no less than thirty vessels at Gardiner, Pittston and Hallowell. One of the most famous of the Kennebec's early shipbuilders was Captain Samuel Grant, who went to Benton at the close of the Revolution and got out the masts for the frigate *Constitution*. He later established a shipyard at Farmingdale, where by 1800, he had built a dozen vessels.

It is surprising to learn that big vessels were once built as far up the river as Waterville. Not only longboats, but schooners,

brigs, and even ships were built there, at least one of them as early as 1794. The abundance of ship timber near at hand made it possible to build vessels cheaply and profitably, and the schooner *Sally* left John Getchell's yard at Waterville eight years before that community became a separate town. Records show that, in the first 35 years of the nineteenth century, no fewer than twenty-two vessels were launched at Waterville, from the little 70-ton schooner *Thomas*, built in 1807 by James Stackpole, to the ship *Sarah* of 290 tons, by Robert Shaw. Although Nathaniel Gilman, Waterville's richest early citizen, owned three of those twenty-two boats, the biggest owner was Johnson Williams, who had contracted for the building of the brigs *Elizabeth*, *Lydia*, *Neutrality*, and a brig launched in 1825 that carried the name of its building site, *Waterville*. These ships never sailed up and down the river to Waterville, much less came to Waterville from the sea. They had to be launched on the spring or fall freshets; at other times there was not enough water. Then they were floated down to Hallowell or Gardiner, where they were rigged and fitted for sea, never to return to the place where they first took to the water.

In the middle of the nineteenth century began the great days of Maine shipbuilding. Then the yards at Yarmouth and Freeport, at Harpswell and Bath, and all along the coast to Machias and Eastport, were turning out the beautiful ships that made the name of Maine famous in every seaport in the world. When we consider how numerous were the shipyards from Kittery to Lubec in the decade before the Civil War, we discover with astonishment the record of the Kennebec in that important industry. The *Maine Register* for the year 1855 identifies the Maine community which launched the greatest tonnage of new ships in 1854. You would never guess it. Not Bath nor Rockland nor Portland, not Harpswell nor Falmouth, turned out the most shipping that year, but rather it was Bowdoinham, up the Kennebec at Merrymeeting Bay, which captured the honor. Down the Bowdoinham ways slid 50,295 tons. Bath was second with 40,000 tons. No other port in all Maine came anywhere near the two leaders. Third-place Rockland launched only 15,000 tons, while Richmond, even farther up the river than Bowdoinham, was fourth with 13,000. No other place in Maine except those four—Bowdoinham, Bath, Rockland and Richmond—produced as much as 10,000 tons of

ship tonnage in 1854. Portland had only 2735 tons, and Cape Elizabeth, where my great-great-grandfather's shipyard once did a thriving business, launched only 925 tons. Hallowell led Machias, Farmingdale beat Castine, and Pittston was away ahead of Calais. Indeed, in 1854, six years before Abraham Lincoln was elected President, most Maine ships were being built along the Kennebec.

One of the most important events that ever occurred on our river was the building of the dam at Augusta. It was completed in 1837, the very year when Nathaniel Hawthorne visited Augusta and stopped at the home of the construction engineer, William Boardman. The dam had a double purpose: to provide power for sawmills and other factories and to create a pond, holding back sufficient water to operate the locks of a short canal. It was the latter cause which pushed the project to completion. As we have seen in an earlier chapter, the 1830's were the years of canal plans and canal booms in many parts of Maine.

After the failure of the original corporation, the Kennebec Dam Company, the halted construction was taken over by the Kennebec Locks and Canal Company, with a capital of \$600,000. In September, 1837, a big banquet was held at Augusta's Mansion House to celebrate the opening of dam and lock. The structure was 584 feet long and rose 15 feet above ordinary high water. Constructed of timber cribs, bolted together and filled with ballast, it had a level top covered with cut stones eight feet long and fastened together by iron straps. The sluice was sixty feet long.

The lock was a big one for its time, with walls 170 feet long, and a chamber 100 by 28 feet, designed for a single lift. All the walls were of granite laid in cement. The lock floor was of timber fifteen inches thick, covered with five inch pine planks, tongued and grooved. The main gates were of white oak brought from Chesapeake Bay, and the wicket gates were of cast iron. Above the dam were large stone piers, built of granite and clamped with iron to protect lock and abutments. For many years afterward Augusta people spoke proudly of the immense amounts of material used to construct their dam: 2,500,000 feet of lumber, 800,000 cubic feet of stone, 25 tons of iron and 75 tons of rock ballast. The pond formed above the dam covered 12,000 acres,

extended sixteen miles up the river and had a depth of sixteen feet.

Of unquestioned benefit to Augusta, the dam was soon viewed with mixed emotions by the inhabitants above Cushnoc rapids. It made possible ship passage to Waterville, without changing to the longboats; for a time it dignified Waterville as the head of navigation. But people soon learned that many a gain is accompanied by compensating loss. The very dam and lock that brought the ships stopped the fish. No longer would the settlers at Getchell's Corner and Winslow, and even up the Sebeccook to Benton Falls, put out their seines for the spring runs of salmon, herring and shad. After 1837 only an occasional and very venturesome fish worked his way through the lock and up past Coons Rips. Now the boats too are gone, but not because of the dam. For more than half a century after William Boardman drew his plans for the dam at Augusta, boats continued to come up the river to Ticonic Falls, but the salmon and the shad came up no more.

Many a young person today believes that suddenly and spectacularly sail gave way to steam on river, lake and sea. Such was not the case; the change came gradually and grudgingly. For almost a hundred years the competition continued. The big clipper ships were built long after steam boats came on the scene, and in the 1900's it was common to find sailing craft with auxiliary engines. But on the Kennebec, after the Civil War, the yards were turning out chiefly steamers.

The first steamboat ever to visit Maine from other parts found its way to the Kennebec. In 1819, only eleven years after Robert Fulton had steered his chugging *Clermont* up the Hudson, a tiny steamer called the *Tom Thumb* put in at Bath. The salt-water farmers on the Kennebec jeered at the strange contraption, just as the Dutch farmers on the Hudson had jeered at "Fulton's Folly."

The men of the Kennebec thought they had reason to think lightly of the *Tom Thumb*, because she had not come to Bath under her own power. Just as, a hundred years later, the sight of a stalled automobile being pulled along by horses always excited laughter, so did sight of the *Tom Thumb* being pulled into Bath from Boston behind a sailing packet. But the scorned little steamer was a success. For many years she plied up and down

the Kennebec between Bath and Augusta, carrying excursion parties and light freight. Captain Jason Collins, writing his memoirs in 1902, recalled once seeing her towing the ship *Constitution* from Gardiner to Bath. Said Captain Collins: "Incredible as it now seems, she took six days to make the trip."

The *Tom Thumb* was actually not the first steam craft on the Kennebec. That honor belongs to Jonathan Morgan, a lawyer of the town of Alna. Now Alna isn't even on the Kennebec. How did an Alna man put the first steamer on our river? He fixed a steam engine on an open scow, launched it in the Sheepscot, propelled it down the river to Wiscasset and around to the mouth of the Kennebec, whence he steamed up the river to Gardiner, where he tied up at Gay's wharf on August 3, 1818.

One of the best and most complete accounts of Kennebec steamboats is contained in the memoirs of Captain Jason Collins. According to Mr. Elliott Hale, chief engineer of the Kennebec Water District, who has kindly furnished me with a copy of Captain Collins' manuscript, the original was found no longer ago than 1943 by Mrs. Eleanor Sager Adams of Gardiner, in the attic of her home. There is no date to show when the paper was written, but its last mentioned incidents occurred in 1902. Altogether it is an account of Kennebec steamboats from 1818 to 1902.

Captain Collins tells about several early steamboats before 1835, then asserts that the business really got going when the need became clear for a steamer to run straight through from Gardiner to Boston without a change at Bath. The leading spirit in the plan was Captain Nathaniel Kimball, whom Captain Collins called the most famous of all Kennebec steamboat men. In 1836 Captain Kimball formed a company and secured stock subscriptions of \$40,000. Such was the beginning of the Gardiner to Boston steamboat line, which was still running when Mr. Collins wrote his reminiscences nearly seventy years later. The first of those through-to-Boston steamers was the *New England*. You could ride in her to Boston for four dollars, including meals en route.

The *New England* came to an early tragic end. On the night of June 1, 1838, on the way to Boston, she collided with the schooner *Curlew*, and so quickly filled with water that her passengers were transferred to the schooner, which headed for near-

by Portsmouth. Captain Kimball and his crew remained by the wreck until the following noon, when the steamer rolled over and floated bottom up. She was later towed to Portsmouth, but lost her engine on the way and proved to be a total loss.

By 1840 the formidable opposition of the Vanderbilts confronted the local steamboat owners on the Kennebec. Commodore Vanderbilt outfitted the steamer *Augusta* and put her on a regular run between Hallowell and Boston. Meanwhile Captain Kimball and Parker Sheldon had replaced the ill-fated *New England* with a new boat called the *Huntress*, destined to become one of the most famous vessels ever to sail the Kennebec. Because she proved a faster boat than the *Augusta*, Commodore Vanderbilt decided to put on the river a boat that no other could beat. That boat was christened the *C. Vanderbilt* and was heralded in the Vanderbilt advertising as the fastest steamer on the Atlantic coast.

Rivalry between the *Huntress* and the *Vanderbilt* was as bitter as that between Mississippi steamers in Mark Twain's day. Each boat had its ardent supporters all along the river. When the captain of the *Vanderbilt* challenged Captain Kimball of the *Huntress* to a trial of speed from Boston to Gardiner, the Maine captain lost no time in accepting. Every member of both crews, as well as a lot of people who had never set foot on either ship, put up wagers on the race, and the grouchy commodore himself is alleged to have ventured a few dollars.

Those old steamers were wood-burners, and the crew of the *Huntress* went to a lot of trouble to secure just the wood they needed for pushing the boilers to the utmost. When the two boats left their Boston moorings, the *Vanderbilt* took a quick lead, but by the time she reached Boston Light the *Huntress* had drawn alongside. At Eastern Point the Maine boat was ahead. All night long the two steamers' lights were in sight of each other. Great excitement prevailed on both craft; no one had any thought of sleep. All the way up the lower Kennebec the *Huntress* led by only a few yards, but as she pulled out of Merrymeeting Bay, her crew gave the boilers their maximum test. At the risk of blowing boat and passengers into oblivion, the *Huntress* steamed up to her Gardiner wharf almost a full mile ahead of the *Vanderbilt*. The whole cheering town was down to see the victorious

boat come in. She had made the trip from Boston to Gardiner in ten hours and forty-five minutes, a record that stood for more than sixty years.

Commodore Vanderbilt did just what one would expect the old tycoon to do. Convinced that no other boat was fast enough to beat the *Huntress*, he bought the *Huntress* himself. Then he turned around and informed her former owners that they could take their choice. Either they could pay him \$10,000 over what he had paid for the *Huntress* and take her back together with his agreement to withdraw forever from Kennebec steamboat competition, or he would put the *Huntress* back on the route himself and ruin their business because they well knew no other boat could compete with her. The company had to accept the wily Commodore's terms. They paid the demanded \$10,000, the *Huntress* returned to the Kennebec traffic still in Maine hands, and Cornelius Vanderbilt withdrew forever from the operation of Kennebec steamers.

When the Eastern Railroad pushed out from Boston to Portsmouth, in 1841, a steamer called the *New York Beach* started making regular runs between Hallowell and Portsmouth, where train connections enabled the traveler to reach the Hub several hours earlier than by the Hallowell-Boston steamer. The line closed a year later, when the railroad reached Portland.

In order to compete with the railroad, the steamboat lines lowered their fares. One line tried to outdo another until the most rampant kind of cut-throat competition was the result. From 1843 to 1850 passengers had a wonderful time. At one time the lines actually paid a round-trip rebate greater than the one-way fare. It all began when Captain Sanford of New York put on the steamer *Splendid* between Hallowell and Boston, in opposition to the regular line. The memoirs of Captain Collins assure us that on some trips the passengers paid whatever they pleased, the captain simply passing the hat. One man bragged that he went all the way from Gardiner to Boston for fifteen cents.

The *Huntress* became famous for other reasons besides her victory over the *Vanderbilt*. On July 2, 1847, she made a special trip from Portland to Hallowell to convey the President of the United States on his way to Maine's capital at Augusta. Reaching Hallowell at midnight, President Polk, members of his cabi-

net, and other distinguished persons transferred to carriages for Augusta, where they spent the night. The next day, after a visit at the state house and a banquet, the whole party became guests of R. H. Gardiner at *Oaklands*. Then the *Huntress* carried them back to Portland.

Ten years before President Polk rode on the *Huntress*, the first steam ferry boat went into operation on the Kennebec. It ran between Gardiner and Pittston. Built entirely in Gardiner, with even her engines made by the Gardiner firm of Holmes and Robbins, she was called the *Kennebec* and continued in service until the building of the Gardiner bridge in 1852. The railroad crowded further upon the domain of the steamers when the Portland and Kennebec R. R. reached Richmond. Then the *Secor* which had been running between Hallowell and Bath, changed to the very short run from Augusta to Richmond.

It was Boston, rather than local interests which operated the Kennebec's biggest steamer before the Civil War. Called the *Ocean* this vessel did a heavy passenger business between Hallowell and Boston until the stormy night of November 24, 1854, when she collided with the Cunard steamship *Canada* just outside Boston Harbor. The *Ocean* naturally got the worst of the collision. She took fire and burned to the water's edge. Nine lives were lost. We of a later generation note with interest that this wreck occurred forty-four years, almost to a day before that terrible Thanksgiving eve when the steamer *Portland* was lost.

In 1857 a group of Gardiner and Hallowell shipping men, among whom was Captain Jason Collins himself, formed a company to build in New York a palatial steamer called the *Eastern Queen*. The cost was \$100,000, a tremendous sum in those days. This boat did a big business for three seasons, then was partially burned in 1860, while laid up in winter quarters at Wiscasset. Rebuilt in yards at East Boston, she resumed her Kennebec run the day before the presidential election of Abraham Lincoln.

The *Eastern Queen*, under Jason Collins' command, had an honorable record in the Civil War. In 1861 she was chartered by the government for the General Burnside expedition to Cape Hatteras. She sailed from New York the following December, carrying the 24th Massachusetts Regiment accompanied by Gilmore's band. Landing those troops at Annapolis, the ship then

took on the 4th Rhode Island, sailed to Hatteras Inlet, arrived at the agreed anchorage, and impatiently waited for three weeks before the signal was given for the first division to get underway. The *Eastern Queen* had the honor of being made flagship of the division. She headed quite a fleet—first the gun boats, then the flag ship, then the transports carrying 12,000 troops—together a line of 75 ships. Off Roanoke Island the troops were disembarked in whale boats, under protection of Federal gun boats shelling the woods. The expedition was successful; on the next day the Confederate forts surrendered.

The Kennebec Company held a monopoly of the river traffic to Boston until 1865, when an opposition line, started at Bath, put the steamer *Daniel Webster* on the Boston route. Then came one of the great ventures among Kennebec boats. To compete with the *Webster*, the Kennebec Company built the *Star of the East*, the most finely equipped boat that then sailed out of Boston for any port. She cost \$180,000 and could carry more than a thousand passengers. Thus each line had two big boats. On one day the *Eastern Queen* would leave Boston while the *Star of the East* left Hallowell. The next day the trips were reversed. On the Bath line, the *Daniel Webster* and the *Eastern City* were operating in the same way. In that manner each line maintained daily trips in both directions.

In those days of the late '60s, when passengers and shippers could choose between two lines every day in the year, competition and fare cutting were even worse than they had been in the '40s. The regular fare from Hallowell to Boston finally dropped to twenty-five cents. Excitement was intense. Crowds of people who had never expected to see Boston, took the trip. Some of them were on a steamboat for the first time in their lives. When winter ice closed the season of 1866, the Bath company had had enough. They never put their boats back on the river, and the Kennebec company returned to a monopoly of the traffic for forty years more.

Boats continued to operate, not only to the islands, but even to Boston, well into the twentieth century. Although ice usually closed the river above Merrymeeting Bay from December to April, steamers ran between Bath and Boston the year round. In 1897 the Kennebec Company built the steamer *Lincoln* for the

winter route to Boston and the summer route between Bath and Boothbay Harbor.

The Kennebec Company itself went out of business in 1901. At last the trend of big business mergers had caught up with the Kennebec steamboats. Steamers, wharves, and all other properties were sold to the Eastern Steamship Company. For half a century the locally owned line had dominated the river. It had outlived the Bath Company, had beaten off the repeated intrusions of Boston interests, had even put off the river the boats of the mighty Commodore Vanderbilt. For most of the nineteenth century the story of Kennebec shipping is the story of Kennebec owners, Kennebec captains, and Kennebec crews.

Even before any steamer reached Waterville, that town had been recognized in the new form of transportation. In 1823 there was built at Bath a steamer called the *Waterville*, and in that year it opened the first regular steam route from Bath to Augusta. In 1824 a boat called the *Patent* ran from Boston to Bath, where she connected with the *Waterville* for Augusta.

The first steamer to dock at Waterville was, appropriately enough, named the *Ticonic*. Built at Gardiner in 1832, the year of the great flood, she made the historic trip to Waterville on June first. The staunch little boat indeed ran the rapids at Augusta. Instead of being helped by the Augusta dam and its canal, four years later, she was actually handicapped. The lock was too short for the *Ticonic*. She never made another trip to Waterville after the dam was built.

The most renowned of Waterville shipbuilders was the firm of W. and D. Moor. It was for them that the *Ticonic* had been built at Gardiner, before they developed their own Waterville yard, just below Ticonic Falls, almost exactly on the site of the first Lockwood mill. In 1842, ten years after the *Ticonic* docked at Waterville, the Moors launched the first steamer ever put into the water in their home town. She was the *Water Witch*, a carrier of freight and passengers between Waterville and Augusta for nearly twenty years. Altogether the Moors built more than a dozen small steamers, putting most of them on the upper Kennebec run. In 1848 five steamers left the Waterville landing every day that the river was open. Because of the comparatively low water, all of the Moor steamers were flat bottomed stern wheelers of about forty tons.

That November day in 1849, when the first railroad train chugged into Waterville, signalled the coming end of the steamboats. Yet as late as 1890 a vigorous but abortive attempt was made to revive the traffic. William T. Haines, later to be governor of Maine, was then a leading Waterville attorney with keen interest in the community's development. He proposed that river navigation between Waterville and Hallowell be reopened to provide cheaper freight service. Spurred by his energetic promotion, Waterville business men formed the Waterville Merchant Steamboat Company with L. H. Soper as president, and sold the stock chiefly to merchants and professional men of Waterville. Those stock certificates, one of which is preserved in the present writer's collection of Kennebec items, were lavishly embossed documents signed by Mr. Soper and by the treasurer, P. L. Heald. The stock carried a par value of \$50 per share, and the proceeds were immediately turned to building a steamer worthy to carry the Waterville name. Contract was let to a builder at Brewer, who in July, 1890, had ready for delivery to the owners a flat bottomed, keelless boat, 90 feet long, with a 20 foot beam, powered by the most up-to-date steam engine of the time. She was given the memorable name of the *City of Waterville*.

Somebody—it may have been Haines himself—suggested a big party cruise to bring the boat from Brewer to Waterville. The idea caught on, and the stockholders agreed that it would be good publicity for the sponsors themselves to sail the boat down the Penobscot, round the coast to the mouth of the Kennebec, and up the river to Waterville. So, on an eventful July day in 1890, forty of the more prominent stockholders gathered at Brewer and boarded their new boat. They had selected as skipper Erastus Warren of Winslow, who had the reputation of being one of the best log drivers on the Kennebec. Events were to prove that knowledge of riding a big pine log down river rapids, though a worthy accomplishment, hardly provided training for piloting a 90-foot keelless boat.

Since several of the stockholders were staunch prohibitionists, the story that there was plenty of liquid refreshment aboard may have been only a vile canard spread by some opposition line. Anyhow, whether because of liquid under the boat or liquid aboard, the passengers agreed they were having a wonderful time. To be sure, the big stern wheeler was drawing more water

than she should, and when they approached the landing at Rockland and tried to give an appropriate salute, water spouted through the whistle and the expected blast fizzled into a dud.

After a calm, uneventful voyage along the coast, the *City of Waterville* tied up for the night at Bath. On the following day fortune took a different turn. Fog set in, as it often does during Dog Days down the river. Cruising aimlessly and sightlessly in Merrymeeting Bay, the steamer came to a sudden stop. She had run on a ledge. When the sun broke through the clearing mist, close by was the river bank and a farmer working in the field. Captain Warren hailed him. The farmer ran to the bank and with frantic gestures yelled, "Git to tarnation out of here. It's full of rocks." That was no news to the joyriders, because the sunlight showed them almost high and dry. They had nearly achieved the fame of Holman Day's fictional steamboat, the *Ezra Johnson*, which sailed right into a Sidney farmyard on an early morning dew.

After much strenuous labor on the part of both crew and passengers, the steamer was at last back in the main channel. To accomplish this task, the stockholders' party had doubtless changed from the tall silk hats and Prince Albert coats which they had worn on the previous evening at Bath. By noon they had reached Augusta, where they were given a boisterous welcome by officials and citizens. Sure that they could reach Waterville before dark, they started out again, but progressed only a few hundred yards. Just under the Augusta railroad bridge they ran upon a gravel reef, where they had to spend the night. The next morning, with the aid of river drivers and horses, they managed to get free and head for the lock on the east side of the river.

By this time the party had endured enough of Captain Warren's navigation. They demoted him to deckhand and selected as new skipper Warren C. Philbrook, a young man who never won any honors at seamanship, but who did later become a justice of the Maine Supreme Court. When the boat emerged from the lock, the new skipper met his first test. Without a keel, the craft was poorly fitted to fight the stiff current just above the Augusta dam. The steamer started to move sideways, heading toward the dam, with the passengers getting more and more certain they were in for a river bath. But Skipper Philbrook and his crew

won the day when the ship finally began to gain on the current and the last leg of the home journey was under way.

For the new steamer the company had built a brand new dock at Waterville. The old city dock was located near Ticonic falls, on the west bank, not far from the site of the present Lockwood storehouse and near where the wharf and yards of the Moors had done such big business half a century earlier. The new landing place for the *City of Waterville* had been built farther down the river, at Pooler's Point, almost exactly opposite the junction of the Sebasticook with the Kennebec.

Word spread through the town that the new steamer, expected the day before but disappointingly delayed, was at last nearing Waterville. The whole town turned out. When the big square-shaped freighter came into view, a brass band burst into tune and cheers arose from hundreds of throats. The passenger stockholders smoothed out their Prince Alberts and polished the sheen of their silk hats. All was now ready for a triumphant landing.

Alas, the bad luck that had pursued the steamer out of Bath still hovered over the awkward craft. Just as she started to turn from the Winslow bank to head into her smart new landing, she again struck a ledge. And there, just off shore from the old Winslow church, and within sight of both the church and the unchurched of both communities, she refused to budge. Her chagrined and disgusted stockholders could only take to row boats and make an ignominious landing on the Waterville side.

In time, however, the *City of Waterville* was pulled off the ledge and actually put into operation on the river. Never, however, did her owners achieve their goal of daily trips between Waterville and Augusta. After brief, intermittent service on the upper Kennebec, the *City of Waterville* was sold to a Virginia firm, and stern-wheeled her way to a southern port, never to return.

Chapter XV

ITCHING FEET

IN the Old World, where systems of class and caste became solidified by generations of precedent, men tended to stay in the home where their ancestors had lived, unless driven away by war or pestilence. In pioneer countries like the United States, a few young people in each generation get itching feet. Their forebears had the same urge, else they would never have crossed the Atlantic to get here in the first place. So the young men of the nineteenth century in New England came honestly by the desire to seek greener and richer pastures far away.

Large families made it inevitable that some of the children should leave home. Every Kennebec settler planned to establish his sons on neighboring farms. That, rather than to expand his own acres, is the reason that many a pioneer in the Valley kept buying land. A near-by farm for each son, and daughters married to young farmers not too far distant—that was the family goal in early Maine. But not all farmers were able to achieve it. For various reasons some of them did not prosper, and had to sell land rather than buy it. Such a man's sons wandered away when they came to years of manhood.

Even the prosperous settlers could usually not hold all the sons. To some of the boys life in the home neighborhood seemed too hard and the chance of success too precarious. A son of Sidney's well-to-do Dr. Howard sought his fortune in New Orleans. Nathaniel Gilman found New York more attractive than Waterville. First the sawmills, then the big cotton mills, drew boys from the farms. And always the expanding West issued its siren call. Just as young men from the Maine coast towns made up the crews that sailed Maine ships in all the seven seas, so young men from the hinterland farms of the Kennebec flocked to the Kennebec cities and on to Portland and Boston, to New York and

Baltimore, to Chicago and St. Louis, and across prairies and mountains to California.

One of these persistent seekers of greener pastures was Elbra Farris, brother-in-law of John Collins, postmaster at East Vassalboro more than a hundred years ago. Farris had married Collins's sister in 1837. The next year, leaving his wife at her brother's home, he started out alone for Ohio, where he had determined to settle. He would go out to the new territory, get a business established, then return for his wife.

Farris made the trip to Boston by taking at Gardiner the famous steamer *Huntress*, whose victory over a Vanderbilt steamer has been related in the previous chapter. He wrote his brother-in-law from Boston on August 31, "I shall start for New York this afternoon in the two o'clock train of cars." That does not mean that Farris was going from Boston to New York by train, but rather that he was riding the newly established railroad line from Boston to Fall River, where he took the boat to New York. The reason why that combination boat and train trip was so popular for almost a century was because it avoided the long sail around the tip of Cape Cod. The service was ended not only by the coming of the automobile, but quite as much by the building of the Cape Cod canal.

By September fifth Farris had progressed as far as Utica, New York. He was getting along all right, but was concerned for his wife's welfare. So he wrote Collins: "If you see that Harriet wants for nothing, you will not lose by it. You must excuse me for being a little concerned, as you know she is my wife, yet I doubt not you will do all for her that is necessary."

By the middle of October we hear from our man at Pinkerton, Ohio. He had looked up someone named Dodge, evidently a Maine man who had been in Ohio for a year or more. Farris and Dodge planned to set up a drug store in partnership, but decided that Pinkerton was not large enough to support such a business. They decided to go thirty miles north to Chillicothe, of which Farris wrote: "It is a very smart place about as large as Hallowell. It is directly on the canal and there is a great business done there. There is only one small druggist shop, and I think something got up in pretty good style might take well with the Buckeyes."

Elbra was still thinking of the little woman back in the Kennebec Valley. He admonished Collins to get Harriet a good pair of gaiter boots, "as it is cold weather and I know she needs them." Elbra couldn't send Collins any money to pay for Harriet's boots and gave as his excuse water conditions on the Ohio. "I will send you the funds as soon as the Ohio River rises enough for boats to ply between Pittsburgh and Portsmouth. The water is so low that there has not been a boat above Cincinnati during the past three months—a circumstance never known before, so old settlers say."

Evidently things did not go well with the drug store plans. In November Farris was still writing from Pinkerton, and from what he wrote to Collins we know that Harriet was already concerned about money. Farris's pride was hurt by her intentions, as he had learned them, and he wanted his brother-in-law to make the woman change her plans. "Harriet, in her last letter, said she thought of going into a shop. Now, if you will try to put her out of that idea, you will not only grant me a great favor, but will also do her a real kindness. She has once about the same as murdered herself at the business, and she must never think of doing it again, at any rate not while I am living."

Farris returned to Maine, disappointed and somewhat discouraged. But in the following June he was up and at it again. This time he set out for Ohio accompanied by his wife. Now it was Harriet herself who wrote to her brother back in Vassalboro. "I am now on the Erie canal, and the boat goes about half a mile an hour. There are people on board from Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Virginia."

Farris left his wife at Hanover, New York, while he returned to New York City for a fresh supply of goods for trading. He says, "Harriet was beat out before we got to Buffalo, but is better now. While I am gone to the city, she will have time to recruit." What Farris means is "recuperate," or what the old folks used to call "recoop."

Six months went by, and we find the Farrises no nearer Ohio than they were in July. In January, 1840, Elbra wrote rather dolefully to Collins: "I have been disappointed in money matters and cannot get to Ohio this winter. We must stop here

at Forestville" (New York). In the same letter Elbra reminds his brother-in-law that now, when a certain Charles R— is sick and not likely to recover, Elbra forgives him all.

Finally their plight got so bad that Farris had to return to Maine and leave his wife in Forestville. Here she was alone and far from relatives, homesick and discouraged. Evidently she only awaited the necessary money to assure her return to Maine. Perhaps not sure what luck her husband would have raising further funds, she had appealed directly to her brother in Vassalboro. "As soon as I get a letter from you, I will let you know when I start. It is hard to be reconciled to such a fate, but I try to think it will be better by and by."

That is all we can get of the story, as it is revealed in old, family letters. We suspect that besides the fortunate ones who made their homes in the West, there were plenty of families like Elbra and Harriet Farris, who found bad luck hounding them all the way, who tried just as hard as others, but who through no fault of their own couldn't quite make the grade. To those who failed, as well as to those who succeeded, we owe the great story of the settlement of our American West.

Erasmus Howard did better when he left the Sidney home to seek his fortune in New Orleans, but even though not handicapped by having to support a wife, he had no easy time at first. He had arrived in the southern city in the summer of 1834. He found the stories about plentiful jobs and high prosperity greatly exaggerated. In 1832 and 1833 New Orleans had been ravaged by yellow fever with hundreds of deaths. Word reached the North that the population had been so depleted that workmen were scarce and wages high. It was not a cheerful letter which Erasmus wrote his father several weeks after his arrival. "I spent five or six weeks in fruitless search of business, three of those weeks amid incessant rain. Wading in mud half way to the tops of my boots. I explored both sides of the river fifteen miles up and down, but to no avail. All were full, many having already more help than they needed."

Young Howard was offered a future job as clerk and book-keeper at a big sawmill that would start operations in about two months. But Howard couldn't wait two months for a job; mean-

while he had to eat. Although he was getting little food, he already had a stomach full of New Orleans. He wrote his father:

Had it not been for my obligation to complete Lovejoy's business here, as committed to me before I left home, I should long ago have left this sink of the western world, this region of interminable swamps, fearful inundations, incessant rain or scorching sun, perpetual mud or smothering dust—a moral Sodom, the purgatory of the ebony race from all the other states—the city of refuge for this lone creation, the Babel of a thousand tongues, the Pandanum of as many different colors—but still the residence of a few good, stable, kind and religious people.

Erasmus made plans to go up to the sources of the Mississippi as an employee of the American Fur Company. He had visions of what he calls "scaling the Rocky Mountains in search of the buffalo and other game of the Far West." But he never made that trip. Instead he found a job in New Orleans. Before leaving Maine, he had learned the carpenter's trade, and in those days every good carpenter was a cabinet maker. Finding a room for which he had to pay what he considered the exorbitant charge of ten dollars a month, he set up in business as a cabinet maker and joiner. He got his chest of tools and a few other possessions trucked up from the ship where they were still stored. He obtained sufficient lumber to construct a work bench and began at once to make essential furniture for his own needs—bedstead, table and chairs.

Erasmus tells his father about his first work for pay in New Orleans. "The first job I performed was working the molding on the mison channels of the ship *Ceylon*, which I wrought entirely by hand, as I could find no suitable molding tools in this city. I had scarcely finished that job when the ship was run into by another vessel, which carried away her starboard midship works. That gave me another job for three or four days."

Then young Howard encountered one of those Good Samaritans whom strangers sometimes meet when need is great. He applied to his landlady for further work at his trade. She was a French woman of forty-five years. Liking her ambitious new boarder, she gave him a job repairing another house that belonged to her, keeping Howard busy for nearly a month. Then the good lady recommended him to others of her family and friends. "Thus," wrote Howard, "through the kindness of Miss St. Vertorby I have prospered."

Other men from Maine found their way to New Orleans, and it was not long before Erasmus Howard made the acquaintance of John Cottle of Windsor, a lad of nineteen, who had graduated from China Academy, served an apprenticeship in Bangor and had come to New Orleans, he said, "to make five or six hundred dollars and return home in the spring with enough money to set himself up in business near his father's place in Windsor." Alas for youthful hopes! In one of his letters home, Howard tells us what happened to Cottle:

Poor disappointed youth of self-sufficiency and vanity. After six weeks of wading through mud, spending nearly all his funds, and meeting with a continual series of disappointing expectations, he was tempted through despair to try his fortune with his last money on the roulette. The result was what common sense might suppose. Finding him destitute, I invited him to live with me. He was with me about five weeks before he obtained any business, and he rendered me some assistance on the heaviest work of my job. Finally he obtained employment in a baking establishment at \$25 per month. Then the bakery burned, but he fortunately got another job where he is receiving \$30 a month.

When we recall what a kindly man was Dr. Ambrose Howard, as he ministered to the sick in the town of Sidney, we can well understand how a son of his would extend a helping hand to all needy fellow travelers from Maine. Cottle had scarcely got on his feet when Howard took in another impoverished State of Mainer, Nathan Sims of Union, who like Cottle had graduated from China Academy and had then determined to go to sea. With visions of far flung ports and good wages, Sims shipped as a seaman on the bark *Tamerand* out of Thomaston for New Orleans and thence to Europe. By the time the ship landed at New Orleans, Sims had had enough. He decided, as Howard put it, that "his constitution was not at all adapted to a seafaring life." Considering him "a young man of good sense with a good English education and with principles and habits of the old Puritan stamp," Howard took him in. Soon Sims too found a job in New Orleans and elected to make his home there. Whether any of these three Maine boys ever returned to the home state we do not know. Howard was still in the southern city when his father died in 1838.

As we have indicated, our knowledge of the Farrises and the Howards, in their journeyings far from Maine, come chiefly from family letters. Letters mailed in the 1830's were without either

envelopes or postage stamps. Each letter, usually written on large sized paper, was ingeniously folded, and the address was then written on the outside. One of Erasmus Howard's letters, for instance, was written on pages one, two and three of a foolscap sheet, with the fourth page left blank to make the outside fold and carry the address. That letter is unique in a practice that shows thrift and ingenuity. Having finished the third page, Howard went back to Page One and continued his letter between the already written lines of that page. That practice makes the letter no easier to read 120 years later, but with patience it can be deciphered.

Why didn't Erasmus Howard simply use another sheet of foolscap, fold it inside the four-page sheet, and thus save his father the trouble of making out that interlined script? The answer is found in the comparatively high rate of postage and the basing of that postage on the number of foolscap sheets that were used to make a letter. Here are the rates as given in an almanac of 1830. "For every letter of single sheet, delivered by land, 40 miles, 8 cents; 90 miles, 10 cents; 150 miles, 12½ cents; 300 miles, 17 cents; 500 miles, 20 cents; more than 500 miles, 25 cents. Every double letter, of two sheets, is to pay double the said rates, every triple letter, triple the rates."

Now remember that, before the days of postage stamps, postage was paid by the receiver, not the sender. Perhaps other young men would have been quite unmindful of what father would have to pay for a letter. Not so Erasmus Howard. Knowing that his father must pay postage according to the number of sheets, that Sidney boy, with commendable Maine thrift, managed to get five pages of writing on three pages of a single sheet, by going back and writing between the lines. That kind of Maine youth deserved to prosper in New Orleans.

Sometimes our Kennebec boys were drawn away literally by the lure of gold. Haley Bryant, son of William Bryant of Fairfield, was such a boy. Even before he came of age and could legally leave the parental roof, he had itching feet and was constantly begging his father for a chance to work farther away from home. He tried the woods with William Connor's crews, but did not like it, and his pet hate was hoeing corn.

Haley had a mind of his own and apparently wasn't eager to take advice from father or mother. On February 15, 1842,

the father wrote in his journal: "Haley started for the saplin with William Connor about eight o'clock. It grew cold most all day, and was a terrible tedious day to ride against the wind. I fear Haley got frost bitten, for he had not any outside coat except a short jacket, because he told his mother he would not be plagued with any."

Six years elapsed, during which Haley came of age, worked at odd jobs for the Connors and the Totmans, leading lumbermen of Fairfield, occasionally helped with a neighbor's haying, and did what he had to do on the home farm. But he was constantly discontented. In October, 1848, he left the home farm near Nye's Corner to take the boat at Waterville. On that boat he rode down the river to Hallowell and there changed for a steamer to Boston, whence he shipped again for Philadelphia. Accompanied by several other young men from Maine, Haley Bryant was bound for the western Pennsylvania woods for logging and sawing operations. The wages seemed to be better and the pastures greener than in Maine.

Something went wrong. In William Bryant's journal, under the date of January 25, 1849, appears this cryptic statement: "Haley returned from Pennsylvania." Just that and nothing more. No hint as to why he returned, or whether the fatted calf was killed, or how his elder brother Cyrus greeted him. Anyhow, he was back home with the itchiness apparently out of his feet, ready to settle down on the Nye's Corner farm.

Bear in mind that this was in January, 1849. Something happened in that year to stir the imagination and tickle the feet of every young man bitten by the bug of wanderlust. Gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill in far-off California. On August 6, William Bryant recorded in his journal, "We suppose that Randall Hall, Daniel Hall, John Nye, Marquis Cayford and John Hodgdon sailed this day from Bangor for California in the ship." There was small reason for William Bryant to make that record if he had not been concerned about the event. Perhaps Haley planned to join those other Kennebec youths and was somehow prevented. Possibly an always anxious mother persuaded him to stay.

Three years later, however, the father had something spectacular to record about Haley, who was then twenty-nine years old. On December 28, 1852, William wrote: "Haley left home

this day to sail in the ship *Baltimore* from New York to Port Phillip, Australia, in quest of gold. The following were with him: Bartlett Nye, B. H. Brown, Rodney Wyman, Briggs Emery, George Holland, Edward Philbrook, and Thomas Judkins."

Wyman returned to Fairfield in 1856, Briggs died in California, and Holland died in Australia. Haley Bryant, however, stayed in Australia, lived and prospered. Though he never returned to the United States, he did send an occasional letter. Nahum Totman, who married Haley's sister, stated in his own memoirs written in 1898, that Haley Bryant was heard from in Australia as late as 1890. Mrs. Gladys Totman Everett of Hallowell, another prominent member of the Totman family, recalls that her mother corresponded with great-uncle Haley through many years.

One man who left the Kennebec Valley for the California gold fields and who did return to pursue a professional career in Waterville was Solyman Heath. The diary of his journey from Waterville to Sacramento is a precious possession of the Heath family. Written in ink in a small buckram bound book, it gives a first-hand, daily account of a remarkable journey. Imagine the thrill of this writer when he had opportunity to read every page of that original diary of a Forty-Niner, telling of a journey to the gold fields made in the very year 1849.

Solyman Heath, unlike most of the Forty-Niners, apparently did not go to California in search of gold. He thought the journey would be good for his ailing health, and especially for the health of his somewhat tubercular fifteen year old son, William, whom he decided to take along. What an experience for a teen age boy! Though destined, a few years later, to die a hero's death on a Civil War battlefield, that boy did survive the rigors of the terrible trip across plains and mountains, worked a while in a San Francisco store, then shipped off to China, from which distant land the anxious father soon had him returned through the intercession of the United States government.

When he got back to Waterville in 1851, young William Heath went to Colby College and was graduated in the famous class of 1853, a class that lost three men on the battlefield and that boasted such prominent names as Reuben Foster, who served as both Speaker of the House and President of the Senate in the Maine legislature; Oliver Gray, a distinguished Confederate

colonel, who founded Arkansas' first school for the blind; Joseph Pettengill, chief justice of the Kansas Supreme Court; and Larkin Dunton, renowned head of the Boston Normal School for more than thirty years.

When Company "H" of the Third Maine Volunteers was recruited in Waterville, William Heath became its captain and his brother Francis its first lieutenant. Both brothers rose rapidly in the service, William becoming lieutenant colonel of the Fifth Maine. He was killed in action, gallantly leading his men, at the battle of Gaines' Mill, Virginia, in June, 1862. After the war the Waterville post of the Grand Army was named the William S. Heath Post in his honor.

That military record and its tragic ending were unsuspected when fifteen year old William set out with his father on the overland journey to California. Of the early part of the trip we know little, for the diary does not begin until they have crossed the Mississippi. Then, in a sort of recapitulation of the preceding days, Solyman Heath wrote on May 5, 1849: "In Baltimore stopped at U. S. Hotel, where found a well kept house with polite and attentive servants. At Harper's Ferry darkies cut antics, played on cymbals and shouted lustily, all because an opposition eating house had been established at half price. At Cumberland nothing very striking save a want of accommodation in two stages. Agents of the different stage lines to Pittsburgh vied for passengers, which is exceedingly foolish inasmuch as both lines are run by the same company. Over the Alleghany Mountains we were transported at a rapid rate. The road is in tolerable order, but since the nation has given up the charge of it, it is not much cared for."

Some comprehension of the time consumed on such a journey is afforded by Solyman's careful record of the dates. "April 14th, left Baltimore for Cumberland; 15th, reached Pittsburgh; 16th, to Wheeling." The actual entry for May 5th itself is: "Arrived at Waynes Landing, Independence, Missouri. Overflowing with people, our company stored away in the attic with thirty others. We found our bedding and lodged on the floor."

With the help of the diary, even considering its silence between Wheeling and Independence, it is not difficult to figure out Solyman's route to the latter point. He evidently took one of the regular packet boats from Boston to Baltimore. Thence he went

by stage coach intervals to Wheeling in what is now West Virginia, passing over the Alleghenies to Pittsburgh on the way. At Wheeling he boarded a boat down the Ohio river and then a short distance up the Mississippi to St. Louis. There he would take one of the many boats going up the Missouri river to Independence. In our day that town is famous as the home of a former president. In 1849 it was the "jumping-off place" for wagon trains to California. Nine out of every ten trains of prairie schooners that went over the plains and mountains to California in 1849, started from Independence, Missouri.

If we think that the wagon trains, like that which Heath joined at Independence, were going through unexplored country, we are badly mistaken. By the summer of 1849 the route was well travelled and well marked. The astounding thing about Solyman's account is that, all the way from Missouri to California, Heath's train was seldom alone. Almost every day they caught up with other trains, or others caught up with them. Frequently they met travelers going in the other direction. It wasn't the traffic of the Maine Turnpike 105 years later, but it was not by any means a deserted trail.

The route struck out from Independence across Northeast Kansas, crossing the Kansas river, the Big Vermilion, and the Big Blue before going into what is now Nebraska. Then the trail followed the valley of the Platte northwest to Fort Kearney, now the city of Kearney, Nebraska. Where the north and south forks of the Platte unite to form the main river, the trail crossed the south fork and continued west along the bank of the north branch. It crossed the Nebraska-Wyoming border near Scott's Bluff, where is now the Scotts Bluff National Monument. Thence it continued to the most famous trading and cavalry post in the whole western country, Fort Laramie, which readers of Parkman's *Oregon Trail* will recall as one of the most vivid of many frontier scenes depicted by that gifted New England writer. In western Wyoming, near the Utah border, is the South Pass, the discovery of which in 1836 had enabled the first reasonably safe crossing of the Rockies by wagon. Passing just north of Great Salt Lake, the route then followed a fork of the Humboldt river into Nevada, crossed the desert in the northwest part of that region, skirted the rim of Carson Sink, and followed the Carson river to the California border. Then came the last and toughest

mountain climb, the passage across the Sierras at what is now the Donner Pass, celebrated by Bernard de Voto in *The Year of Decision*. From those heights it was only a few days' journey to the rich gold fields near Sacramento.

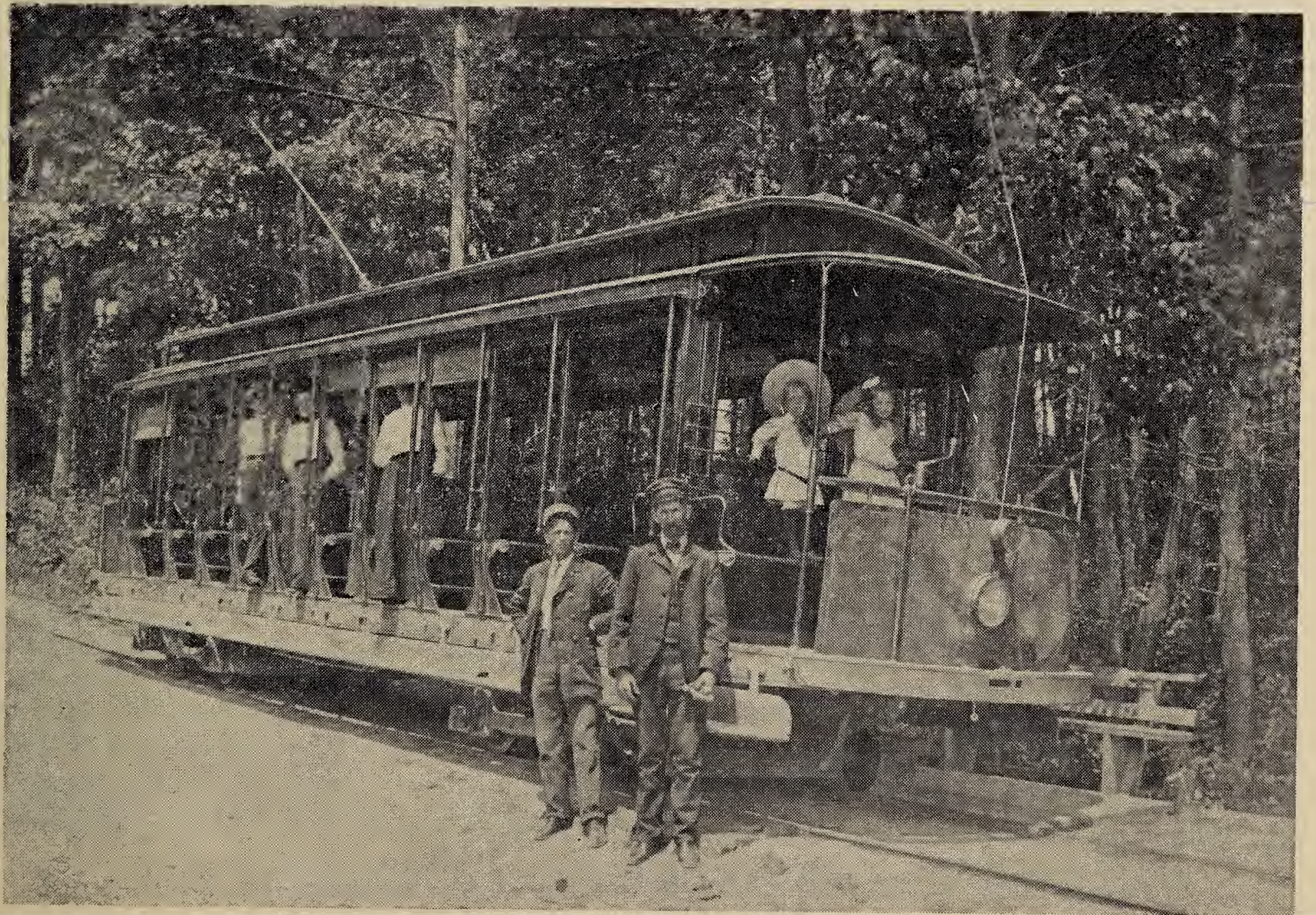
Solyman Heath left Independence on May fifth. It was October thirteenth when he reached the gold fields. A journey that a person in an automobile can make in three days and that an airplane can cover in five hours had taken the Heath party five months and nine days, nearly half a year. It was a journey where death constantly stalked the trail. In fact the most repeated words in Heath's diary are the words "died" and "death." As every reader of western thrillers knows, there were the dangers of Indian raids, of falls into mountain chasms, of the drowning waters of swollen streams. There was the maddening thirst of the desert, the relentless cold of the mountain passes. The present reader may therefore learn with surprise that none of these was the enemy that claimed most lives. No, the great, relentless foe that stalked them every foot of the way across the plains was cholera.

Heath's party was only nine days out of Independence when cholera struck. Heath wrote in his diary: "Bob, our only teamster who had been through to California, died today of cholera. Sick only a few hours." The next day he recorded: "Passed a new grave of some emigrant, then two dead bodies left unburied, with a feather bed ripped open and feathers scattered around." On the 18th they left two of their own number behind, with one of the team's crew to care for them. The next day Heath recorded the outcome: "The team left behind yesterday with two sick men came in at ten o'clock at night with the report that both men had died and were immediately buried. Five of our company are already dead, and we have come less than fifty miles from Independence. Yet it has not had a particle of influence on the great body of the camp. No one thinks of turning back."

It was not long, however, before morale became seriously affected. "While we were at tea, a six-ox team with a family drove up from the Kansas river, bound back for the States. They had gone fifteen miles beyond the Kansas, bound for California, but the man and leader had died of cholera, forcing the wife to decide on returning east." Three days later they encountered another returning party, this time a train of three teams, not



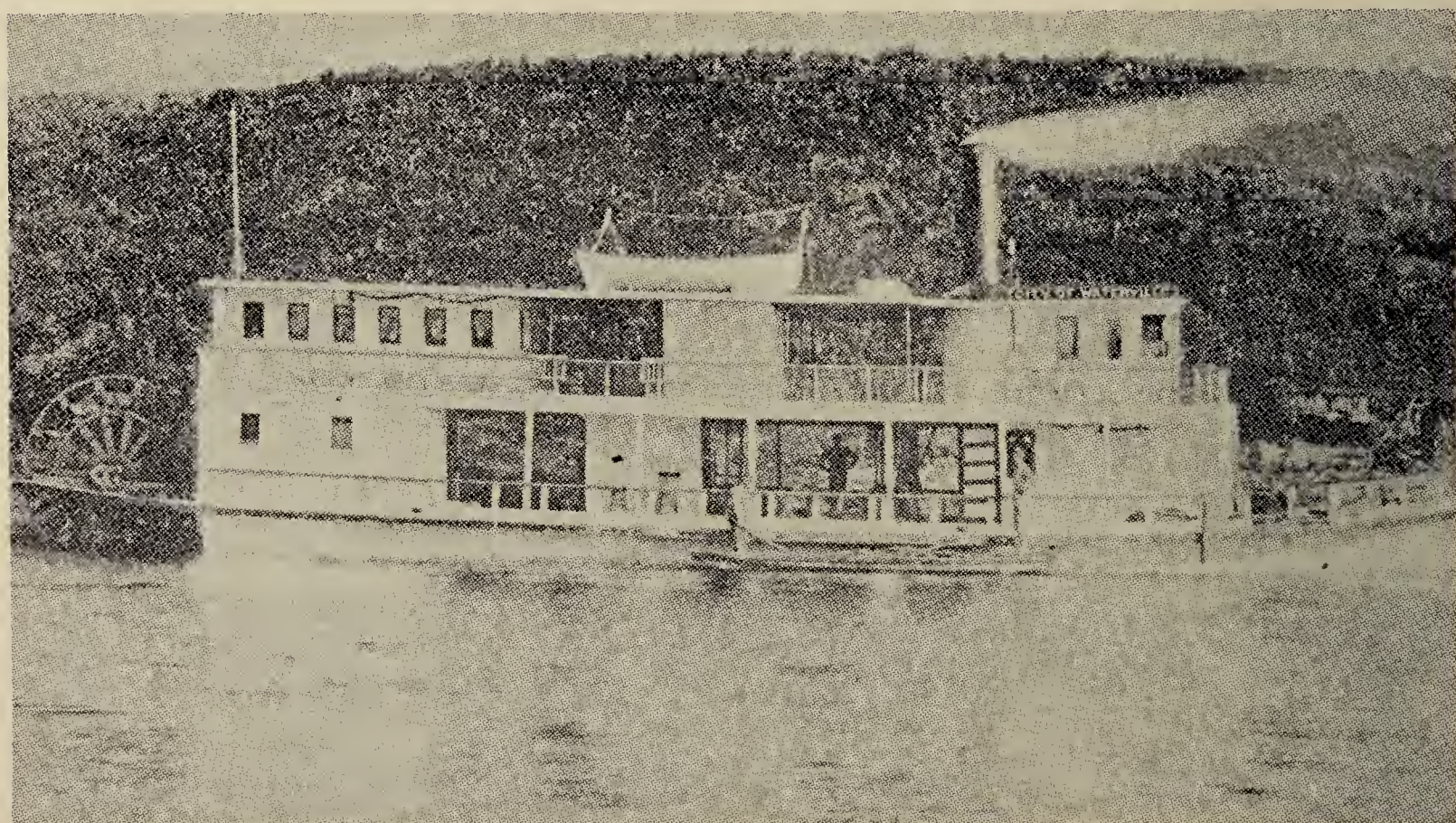
HORSE CAR on which the author rode in 1896 to the old Chatauqua grounds at Fryeburg.



ELECTRIC TROLLEY CAR at Cemetery Hill in 1904.



SNOW ROLLER—In the 1890's they did not break out the winter roads, they rolled them down.



STERN-WHEEL STEAMER—The ill-fated *City of Waterville* in 1890.

just a single family. Here too the leader had died of cholera. For the Heath party, returning teams now became almost a daily occurrence, so that on May 27 Solyman wrote: "Death all around us. In the Kentucky train a few rods south of ours and in another camp a few rods east, death entered and took from each a victim. They were buried this morning without coffins. They were sick only a few hours, and without preparation were launched into eternity. Yet these things seem to have little influence on the living."

On the last day of May, Heath's train suffered its seventh death from cholera, and on the next day Solyman's own teamster succumbed to the disease. Heath ends his day's entry with the oft repeated words, "Slow progress because so wet." In fact the extreme ravages of cholera were attributed chiefly to the damp weather. They had no completely fair day for weeks on end, and streams were frequently so swollen that they had to wait a week or more to get across.

On June 4 came a cheering reminder of home. Their camp was visited by a man from Belfast, Maine. He brought no cheerful news, however. One of his company had been stricken with cholera, and they were so short-handed that they had to leave him beside the trail. The man had sufficient strength to crawl two miles to a creek. Like the priest and the Levite in the story of the Good Samaritan, two trains of emigrants had passed but had refused to take him along. After two days a third company did pick him up, but he died that night.

Solyman had a high regard for a man whom he calls simply "Mr. Smith." He is, in fact, the only man in the whole journal to whom Solyman gives the title of mister. He was, says Solyman, a Presbyterian and a Mason. When cholera claimed Smith as the train's tenth victim, Solyman was able to write: "Mr. Smith was one of very few who were buried in a coffin. The breakdown of a wagon furnished the wood. He was given a full Masonic funeral."

In spite of Heath's repeated contention that others seemed little affected by the deaths, morale was at a low ebb by the end of the first week in June. The leader of the train had discharged a teamster for stirring up discontent and urging that the train turn back. Some of the discontented demanded a vote on whether

to continue. It was taken and the dissenters were beaten four to one.

Although untouched by cholera, Solyman was not a well man. Though somewhat calloused by the harrowing experience, he was sometimes so sick that he could not write in his diary for several days and had to cover the elapsed time in one day's entry. Yet it was with no callous feeling that he wrote: "Today death took a young lady only eighteen years old, married just before we left Independence. I was present at the wedding and recall with what eagerness she looked forward to golden California." But on the same day Solyman recorded that he had passed a tent where four men with spades waited for a sick man to die, that they might bury him. "Such," said Solyman, "is the estimate of life on the plains." Then, without apparent emotion, he added, "The sick man was named Harlow from Belgrade, Maine."

There seemed to be no end to the plague. On June 24 they passed eleven graves, all occasioned by cholera. "We had supposed we had passed beyond its ravages," wrote Solyman, "but we are horribly mistaken." On that night they made near famous Chimney Rock their fortieth camp since leaving Independence. Forty camps in forty-nine days; there had certainly been some stop-overs. But they had now seen the worst of cholera. Solyman's diary thereafter mentions it only occasionally.

The Waterville man was at times entranced by the scenery. He marveled at the vast expanse of the prairie, the myriad colors of the high cliffs, the seeming closeness of the starry sky at night. Thinking of the rocky farms back home, he observed of the rolling prairies, "A Maine farmer placed here could ask for nothing better." Early in June they saw many antelope and elk, but no Indians. Not a human being except fellow emigrants did they encounter for many weeks. The loveliness of the country that is now Nebraska so deeply impressed Solyman that he wrote: "Desolation reigns here on one of the fairest regions on the face of the earth. Yet in the past few days we have traversed enough of rich soil to furnish bread for the whole world. When shall this land be settled? That is an interesting question." Indeed it is still interesting. For in spite of the impressive cities of the western plains, one can still travel the trail of the Heath wagon train, for many a mile without seeing a human habitation. The

settlers came, the great wheat farms were developed, the cattle ranches prospered, but except in the river-front cities, the population in rural areas remained almost as widespread as it had been in the Indians' day.

Solyman was impressively awed by the sight of Chimney Rock. "At our distance," he wrote, "it truly resembled a great chimney shooting three hundred feet into the air. It is of sandstone and has a large crack, indicating that this remarkable object of the plains will disappear in a few years." How wrong Solyman proved to be. A hundred years after the Waterville traveler saw it, Chimney Rock is still there.

More than once these impressive surroundings turned Solyman's thoughts to religion. "To a religious mind the prairie views afford the very highest themes for reflection. Whether one gazes upon the unbroken, treeless prairie, or turns toward the gigantic, broken, storm-beaten cliffs, one is led immediately to a contemplation of the Divine, and feels his own weakness and littleness amidst this wonderful display of omnipotence. Yet how few who have beheld this have given thought to the Almighty Architect."

As the wagon train approached the Platte river, the travelers encountered exactly the opposite condition of weather from that which had made them miserable in the cholera-infested moisture of Kansas. Here was a region which later geologists were to identify as once the bed of an ocean. Everything was dry as powder. "The greatest droughts we have in Maine," wrote Solyman, "are pleasant showers compared to the burning on the Upper Platte. The moisture has evaporated from my skin, my face and hands are cracked, and it seems as though I would dry up."

Crossing the Platte was a major event. When we read accounts of crossing the continent by prairie schooner, we have an impression indelibly pressed upon our minds by the movies. We think of a lonely train of half a dozen wagons making the hazardous trip across rivers and over mountains. As previously pointed out, this was not at all the case. Nevertheless a section of Solyman Heath's diary is so startling, in reference to company on the trail that it is worth special emphasis. It was on the national holiday of July 4, 1849, that Solyman wrote: "We were determined to get ahead of the mass waiting at the upper cross-

ing. There are said to be over 4000 wagons waiting there to get across. So we took the lighter passenger wagons across on a ferry farther down stream, and the baggage wagons managed to get across with great difficulty some distance above, but not so far as the upper crossing where the congestion existed."

Considering that the average wagon train carried three persons to a wagon, counting all the men, women and children in the party, Solyman is telling us that 12,000 people waited at a major crossing to get over the south fork of the Platte. That is a number two-thirds as large as the present population of either Augusta or Waterville. Perhaps Solyman exaggerated a bit, but the number was large enough to impress him strongly.

When he crossed the continent in 1849, any traveler had plenty of company. Emigrant trains were leaving Independence every two or three days. A train would be composed of thirty to fifty wagons. It was not unusual for the people in a single train to number two hundred, and occasionally a very large train would have double that number. There were whole families—men, women and children. There were single, unattached males. There were the professional teamsters and the indispensable guides. There were servants and sometimes even slaves. Travel in such trains of wagons, rather than striking off alone, was necessary, not only as protection against Indians, but also to insure safety for those whose wagons broke down or whose draft animals died or strayed away. The sick must be cared for, the dead must be buried. Though disaster came to a few, the train must still move on.

As a matter of fact, however, not every train did go on, at least not with all its company. One day Solyman's train met three teams going in the other direction. They had lost many oxen by stampede and had been forced to turn back. They told the Heath party that more than 5000 wagons were between them and the Rockies, and that 4000 had passed Fort Kearney within the last month.

However plentiful the company and however exciting the journey, Solyman suffered pangs of homesickness. On July 5 he wrote: "Last night I lay in the light of a soft, mellow moon, thinking of home, wife and children. These thoughts cheer rather than depress me. I love to contemplate the probable enjoyment of each member at home." Ten days later he was really getting

depressed. "Our journey is becoming tedious. It is altogether too long, and the food is much too monotonous. Already three months have passed since I left home, and it all seems like a dream. I often wonder how those at home have fared, for no word from them has reached me."

Solyman's depression was soon relieved by a novel experience. The hot springs of Wyoming were something he had scarcely visualized in his unusually active imagination. The water bubbled up from a marsh. In it the party parboiled beans for their supper. The water was so hot that Solyman had difficulty washing his face and hands in it. Less than a hundred yards away was a spring of clear, cold water. Solyman could only wonder at a phenomenon which placed "heat and cold in such proximity, even at the surface of the earth." These hot springs were only a foretaste of contrasts to come. On the next day the party found, at the base of a mountain, a large stream of hot water in which Solyman took what he termed "a delicious wash, the temperature being about that of high-toned dish water." On the next night water in the camp froze an inch thick. That was on August 18th, and they were now getting well up into the Rockies.

In a group of people living closely together under trying circumstances for several months, peace and harmony cannot persistently reign. The discharge of a teamster has already been mentioned. Only three days after crossing the Platte, the company found real excitement, a threatened duel. An Englishman in the party had called an excitable Frenchman an S. O. B., and the Frenchman demanded immediate satisfaction. The antagonists, oblivious of the code duello, couldn't wait to choose seconds or observe any other formalities. They strode some thirty yards out of camp, armed with pistols. Such a show being too good to miss, most of the camp followed along. After getting to the agreed place, however, the Englishman recanted, apologized to the Frenchman, and they walked back together arm in arm, to the mingled amusement and disappointment of the spectators. When they had returned to camp, the Englishman said: "Gentlemen, I do not think Mr. LaMalpheu is an S. O. B.; I think he is a pretty good *bas*—." The Frenchman heard him, smiled and nodded. Evidently the word beginning with *bas* was no insult at all.

A man from Maine, where springs and streams and lakes supply abundant water, could not refrain from comment on the lack of that blessed commodity on the western plains. When only two weeks out of Independence, after crossing the waterless prairie and coming thankfully to a fine spring near Bull Creek, Solyman observed: "No New England man can ever understand the worth of water until he crosses the plains." Nearly four months later, near the horrible Carson Sink in eastern Nevada, our traveler wrote:

The earth is widely covered with a white crust. It is entirely destitute of vegetation. Everything around us looks like a dried up lake. Here we are without a drop of water for animals or men. What water there is contains huge quantities of salt. We travel for two hours, then rest, and so continue until we reach drinkable water. At five o'clock today we came to some wells, with a pittance of water in them, but so salt and sulphurous that we could not drink it. Both passengers and animals have suffered intensely from thirst.

Before they reached the Sierras, the party had encountered several bands of Indians, all friendly. Not a single hostile red man did Solyman see, during the entire six months from Missouri to California. Strangely, they found known Indian country nearly deserted. Solyman was curious as to the reason, but apparently learned no satisfactory answer. Ten days out of Independence, they saw two Indian lodges but no signs of life around them. Two days later they camped in Pottawatomie Indian country, but saw no Indians. But on the very next night three Indians were detected prowling around the wagon camp, suspected of trying to steal horses. Expecting trouble when they reached Pawnee country, they were relieved to learn that the Pawnees were far away, at war with the Comanches. Soon afterward the company had a scare. They were overtaken by another train, which reported that a man had been found scalped. As if in confirmation, Heath's own company soon found a body in the same condition. Then they encountered another emigrant train that had exchanged shots with Indians who had stolen some of their oxen. In fact, when Indians were hostile, they seemed bent on securing animals by stampeding horses and cattle, rather than intending any personal harm to the travelers. When Heath's party reached Fort Laramie, he wrote: "We have seen no sign of Indians for the past week. It is hard to believe we are in Indian territory." They had passed through the land of the war-like

Sioux without seeing a single Sioux brave. Nevertheless, they were glad to reach the country of the friendly Shoshones in Nevada. Heath commented: "Our camp was visited today by Indians of the Shoshone tribe; not grave and taciturn like the other Indians we have seen, but volatile and laughing."

Naturally a keen and sympathetic observer, Solyman took note of Indian customs. Their various methods of burial fascinated him. At what he was sure was the grave of a chief, he saw the burial spot fenced around and covered with logs. The body appeared to be not under the earth at all, but placed in a reclining posture, with its face toward the setting sun. A bow and arrow lay at the side.

The Sioux method of burial was different. In a large oak tree, forty feet from the ground, was a wicker basket, in which lay the body with all the man's earthly possessions. Strangely incongruous among the Indian-made ornaments, Solyman noticed an ordinary tin dipper. The basket was covered with buffalo skins, all neatly painted. Solyman learned that these burial trees were never cut down, but were considered sacred to the dead. Whenever a thoughtless traveler marred either the tree or the sacred basket in its branches, the tribe's wrath descended upon him.

Today every American school child knows how western Indian mothers carried their babies. Children's books are filled with pictures of the stiff boards to which a child is securely tied, and the whole then strapped to the mother's back. But in Solyman Heath's day, few easterners had even heard about, much less seen, such a device. Solyman, therefore, could only record his astonishment: "We saw two squaws riding on one pony. They carried a baby about four months old. It was tied firmly to a board, laced up tight in some kind of skin, and hung to one side of the saddle. The board was so arranged that the child could be quieted by a motion when, just like our own children, it began to cry. It was the most singular contrivance I ever saw and looked mighty uncomfortable."

As they neared the Sierras, the Heath party met travelers who gave them conflicting news. On one hand they were told that San Francisco had been blockaded to keep out foreigners. Others said there were rich pickings in the gold fields. One day Solyman confided to his diary: "Discouraging news from Cali-

fornia has spread through the camp. Have I come so far from home and loved ones all for naught?" But on the very next day he wrote: "Tonight we have reliable good news, which has brightened up the whole camp. Such joy I have seldom seen." Only two days later he was uncertain. "We have received both favorable and unfavorable reports from California today. Plenty of gold, but sickness devastating."

On September 24 Solyman talked with two men who had passed the Canyon of the Sierras and had returned. They told him it was an extremely hazardous passage, much harder to traverse with wagons than any of the heights in the Rockies. On the very next day Solyman's party began to find out what those travelers meant. They penetrated the canyon for three miles but could not get through before darkness overtook them and they had to make camp. The next day they managed finally to get through what Solyman agreed was the worst place he had ever seen for wagons. He wrote:

We have ascended steep hills filled with boulders, often causing the mules to fall. We passed over ledges which looked too formidable even for a foot passenger. We got over the first ridge with a loss of only two wagons. The whole canyon is strewn with the wreckage of wagons, harnesses and dead animals. Never do I wish to go over that ground again.

But they had not yet seen the worst. Ahead of them rose another ridge, specked with snow. They had twenty miles to go before they reached its summit—twenty miles of dangerous, relentless toil. They lost three more wagons, one man broke his leg, four mules were killed, before they negotiated the perilous passage to the top of the ridge, where the waters on the other side flowed to the Pacific. If Solyman had read Keats, as few Americans had in 1849, he might well have compared himself with the discoverer who first saw the blue Pacific from the peak in Darien.

There were still more mountains to be crossed. On the very day after they found the streams flowing westward, Solyman's diary entry recorded more trouble.

Today we reached the most difficult ridge we have yet encountered . . . five miles of the roughest climb. Wagons repeatedly upset, two broken into kindling. We passed snow banks fifteen feet deep, but so hard packed that the heels of my boots would not make half the impression on it that they made on bare earth. At last we reached the western slope and once more camped on grass.

They were now getting close to what Solyman called "the diggins." When I first read the diary in the spring of 1951, I supposed Solyman used the expression as a general term for the gold fields. I was confused by the vagueness of geography that afflicts the diary after the party's arrival in the gold region. Anxious to plot Solyman's route as accurately as possible, I had done pretty well until I got him to the northeast border of what is now the state of California; then the trail became bleary because Solyman abandoned all place names. He referred merely to "the diggins" and "the city." It was clear that the city was Sacramento, but where were the diggins?

There the matter rested for nearly two years. Then on a January day in 1953 I visited the Los Angeles County Museum in California. Imagine my delight when, in an exhibit devoted to the old gold rush days, I found a model of old-time Placerville. The descriptive card read: "This place was originally called Dry Diggins, and was the first place reached by immigrants coming through the Carson Pass." Solyman Heath had misled me by his spelling of "diggins" with a small "d." He surely meant the place everyone was then calling the Diggins, as a short term for Dry Diggins, because Solyman certainly got there through the Carson Pass, and there he had his introduction to the gold fields.

Modern Placerville is some forty-five miles due east of Sacramento, on Route 50 from Sacramento to Carson City, Nevada. Thirty miles to the north is the better known Route 40, main highway between San Francisco and Salt Lake City. The 1950 census gives Placerville 3,794 people. It probably had nearly as many when Solyman Heath arrived there in 1849. Unlike many other old mining towns of the west, it is not yet a ghost town, not merely a wide place in the road. It is a quiet trading village in what a hundred years ago was the scene of some of the wildest and wooliest violence in the Golden West.

It was on October 7, five months and two days after the departure from Independence, when the Heath party reached what was called the "upper diggins." Prices were outrageous. Solyman paid a dollar for a meal consisting of bread, apple sauce, a pickle, and coffee. But he had the satisfaction of sitting in a chair at a table with a cloth on it, for the first time in five months.

The next day Solyman found a boarding place, at three dollars a day, at a place called Weaver Creek. This was a time when

some of Solyman's relatives back in Maine were boarding the schoolma'am and giving her twenty-one good meals a week for two dollars. Three dollars a day for lodging was unheard of by Solyman or any other New Englander.

Evidently the wagon train was going still deeper into California, to the lower gold fields, for on October 12 Solyman had a trying experience. He walked ahead to what he calls the "Mormon town," and there had dinner. Then he learned that the wagon train had gone another way and left him with no choice but to continue on foot. But Solyman had hitch-hiker's luck in spite of the ominous fact that the day was Friday the thirteenth. That night he was able to record in the diary: "Succeeded in getting a ride most of the way down to the city. Found the city with no place to lodge. Boarding is high, lodging higher, and as yet I have been unable to find any of those I knew in our train."

Unfortunately we have no record of what Solyman Heath did in California. We only know that, in 1851, he returned to Maine by way of the Isthmus of Panama. He settled down in a Waterville law office, which must have seemed unusually quiet and tame after his tough experiences on the western trail. He became one of Maine's most prominent attorneys and apparently never again showed signs of itching feet.

Chapter XVI

SCHOOLING ON THE KENNEBEC

HAVE you ever tried to find anyone who actually saw a little red schoolhouse? It isn't easy. A lot of people think they must have seen one, but when you pin them down they are likely to admit they have only heard about one. I have no doubt, somewhere in Maine, a one-room schoolhouse, painted red, is still in use. I can remember just two such buildings, but only one of them in Maine. In my boyhood town of Bridgton, in the western part of the town, stood a schoolhouse with honest-to-goodness red paint. I never attended it, but it was in use all through my own schooldays in the village, five miles away.

It is probably fact, not legend, that a hundred and fifty years ago most schoolhouses were painted red. That is why the only other red schoolhouse I ever saw has its paint constantly renewed in the same color. It is the very schoolhouse which Mary of "little lamb" fame once attended. Henry Ford brought the decaying building to his restoration site at Sudbury, Massachusetts, restored it to what was believed to be its original condition, installed a teacher and operated a school. Schoolhouses and barns were painted red, we are told, because red paint was easily and cheaply made. When the first scattered settlers built their cabins along the Kennebec, they were not much concerned about schools. Yet, even before they incorporated their towns, having that inherent concern for education which has so long characterized New England people, they took measures to instruct their children. Itinerant schoolmasters and itinerant preachers, sometimes in the same person, were seen at Hallowell and Pittston, at Cushnoc and Ticonic, with considerable frequency between the building of the forts in 1754 and that day in 1771 when four Kennebec towns were simultaneously incorporated. Witness to the rapid growth of the river communities, after the Treaty of

Paris had ended threats from French and Indians, is the fact that Hallowell and Winslow, 25 miles apart on the river, became incorporated as towns on the same day, April 26, 1771.

Long before Maine became a state, the old Commonwealth of Massachusetts encouraged common schools. In fact, by 1771, the law required elementary English schools in every town containing sixty families, and a grammar school where two hundred families resided. In Maine's very first legislature of 1820, the new state made the Massachusetts law even more rigid, requiring every incorporated town, regardless of size, to raise annually forty cents per capita and distribute the amount among the school districts into which the town was divided. In the early days this did not provide much money for each district, the state-wide average in 1825 being only \$47.75. Think of operating a school a whole year on that amount! No wonder a whole year sometimes meant only eight or ten weeks.

Even after their incorporation, the Kennebec towns were not always able to comply with the law. Remember that law was double-barreled. It is to the everlasting credit of our New England forefathers that schools and churches, education and religion, went hand in hand. In every community they strove to erect, even before they got mills and barns, a schoolhouse and a church. But it was not easily done. Some of the communities were desperately poor. In 1772, the Winslow town meeting voted "to hire preaching," but made no mention of schools. In 1784, after a corporate existence of thirteen years, the town voted "not to hire preaching, not to hire schooling, and not to raise any money for town expenses." Times were not quite so hard the next year, for then Winslow raised £20 for preaching, £60 for schooling, and £100 for work on the roads. In 1787, Captain Zimri Haywood was voted the sum of four pounds, eight shillings and sixpence, for paying and boarding a schoolmaster.

It is clear that the people of Winslow were by no means agreed on the support of schooling. Perhaps they regretted the payment to Captain Zimri. Anyhow, in the following year and again in 1789, they voted to "hire no schooling." Yet schools did exist. Even though the town refused to give public support, private citizens were determined to find means to educate their children. This is shown by the agreement which seven Winslow residents, on the west side of the river, made with a private

schoolmaster. In 1796, Nehemiah Parker and six other men, fathers altogether of nineteen children, made a deal with Abijah Smith whereby he would maintain a school in Ticonic Village for a term of three months. Smith was to supply the schoolroom, furnish his own board and room, while on their part the subscribers agreed to pay him a total of twenty dollars a month and furnish sufficient fire-wood for his schoolroom. Actually that was good pay for teaching in those days, as we shall see when we take a look at some public school records later in this chapter.

Education suffered the same vicissitudes all along the Kennebec until well into the nineteenth century. Perhaps the one exception was Hallowell, where schools obtained early and uninterrupted support. In fact, only twenty years after the town's incorporation, an institution even higher than a grammar school was started in that town. On the same day in 1791 two academies, the first in Maine, received their charters. One was Berwick Academy, still operating in York County. The other was Hallowell Academy, which had a long and honored existence as an independent school and was finally absorbed into Hallowell's public school system.

For almost the entire nineteenth century the district system of public schools prevailed in the Kennebec Valley. In the earlier days the districts were completely independent in operation and management. After 1820 a district did not raise its own taxes, but received its share of the town's school tax under Maine's forty cents per capita law. But each district had its own supervisor, responsible to no one except the residents of his district. Each district could decide how many weeks it would maintain school, who should do the teaching, what text books should be used. As a matter of fact, text book requirements were lenient. Each child must bring his own books; the school supplied none. Hence, it was not uncommon for children to show up with half a dozen different readers and spellers and arithmetics. There was no grading and perhaps gifted pupils made faster progress than they do today. Practical economy forced the teacher to group the pupils into instructional classes, usually defined as primer, first reader, second reader, etc.

Sometimes, instead of a single supervisor, the larger districts elected a group of school agents, who served for the schools of that one district much as a superintending school committee

now serves a Maine town. For instance, at Waterville in 1805, three agents were elected to serve the Ticonic District, which comprised the settled village section of the town.

At first, the districts in most towns were known by some local name. One of the most startling names I have ever heard for a district was the one called Monotony in the eastern part of the town of Fryeburg. Perhaps the youngsters who went to that school thought its name appropriate. Who knows? It was not long, however, before, all over Maine, the school districts were known by number. In 1808, Waterville's District Number One had more than forty families with 145 children of school age. To the old schoolhouse on the Waterville common—a building long since gone—those children came from Main, Silver, Water and Front Streets, from what are now College Avenue and Western Avenue, through a section still largely covered with woods, across pastures, and along the edge of swamps. It comes as a shock to the red schoolhouse tradition to learn that the building where those pupils of Waterville's old District One attended was painted yellow.

The complete independence of the school districts, while common along the river, was not universal in the early years of the century. As early as 1821 Waterville had elected a superintending school committee, to which the district supervisors were partially responsible, and five years later the committee's powers were extended by the following vote: "It shall be the duty of this committee to make a written report to the town, at the annual meeting in March, describing the state and condition of the several schools, which report shall embrace the following particulars: the name of each district supervisor, the amount of money apportioned to each district, the number of scholars in each, the amount of money expended for masters, for mistresses and for wood, the names and length of employment of each instructor, the number of pupils present at each examination, the kind of books of every kind used in each school, such remarks as the committee may be pleased to make on the discipline, progress, and appearance of each school, whether creditable to the scholars and instructors, or otherwise, with such other facts as the committee may deem interesting and worthy to be communicated to the town."

Some idea of the cost of maintaining the early schools is supplied by the Waterville report of 1836. The town then had fourteen school districts, at least two of which were astoundingly large, for Number One had 212 pupils and Number Five had 204. Even the smallest rural district had fourteen. Altogether the school census, though not the actual attendance record, showed 1049 pupils. What did it cost to maintain those fourteen schools for the year? A total of \$1,131.18. Crosby Hinds, one of Waterville's most famous early schoolmasters, got \$26 a month for a term of eighteen weeks, while under the persistent, unfair system of lesser pay for women, Martha Sheldon got \$14 a month for twenty-three weeks.

As we now take a look at various Kennebec Schools in the latter half of the nineteenth century, let us begin with the schools of Fairfield in 1858. What were the schools like in that town in the year when, out in Illinois, was held the most famous series of political debates in our history, those between Stephen A. Douglas and Abraham Lincoln? Fairfield showed no interest in those far-away debates, momentous as they were to the nation. What concerned Fairfield was the care of the town's schools. That year, it cost the Somerset town only a little more to operate her schools than it had cost Waterville twenty-two years earlier. On all of her schools, in 1858, Fairfield spent only \$1500, of which the state contributed \$386. The whole amount was divided among twenty-five districts. Each usually held a summer term and a winter term, but occasionally a district had only one term a year. In the rural districts, removed from the settlements like Kendalls Mills or Somerset Mills (the old names for Fairfield Village and Shawmut), a child was lucky if he got more than a dozen weeks of schooling in a year.

The supervisor who submitted that 1858 report was E. K. Boyle. He was a man ahead of his time, for back there almost a hundred years ago he attacked a problem that not even yet has been solved in Maine—the problem of too many small schools. The school bus was then seventy years in the future; so Supervisor Boyle did not possess our solution to the problem. But he minced no words about it. He wrote: "One of two conditions must exist in our more sparsely populated districts; either some of the scholars must walk to school at considerable distance from their homes, where they can have decent advantages for learn-

ing, or they have a poor substitute for a schoolhouse near by, where term after term a mere handful of scholars assemble to drag out five or six hours a day, without suitable teacher, or any advantages to make the school hours interesting and profitable. There are too many schools scattered over this town. It is better for a scholar to walk two miles to attend a school of sufficient numbers to make him emulous of keeping pace with the smartest scholars than to walk half a mile to attend a school where he is the only scholar in a class."

You will recall the vote of Waterville in 1821, when it instructed its school committee to report "such remarks as they may be pleased to make on the discipline, progress and appearance of each school, whether creditable to the scholars and instructors, or otherwise." That sort of report was not unique in Waterville; it was the common practice all through the Valley. The 1858 report of Supervisor Boyle of Fairfield was brutally frank. Of District Number 3 he wrote: "Here is nothing that can be dignified by the name of schoolhouse. In this district are some fine scholars, though most of them are young; and they go to school in a building hardly fit for a sheep pen. What seats they have are entirely unsuited to comfort or health, and in cold weather nothing can make the place comfortable except a gigantic fire apparatus capable of warming all out of doors. If the powers of evil could invent some prison-house, and make it as repulsive as possible to the free and joyous spirit of a child, they could not hope to surpass this schoolhouse."

Boyle was no less blunt in his remarks about the teachers. In Miss F.'s school at Kendalls Mills, he found lack of interest among the scholars. Of Mr. N. he said: "This school is not very profitable. The teacher is quite young and is too inexperienced to take charge of a school." He found that Mr. J. worked hard, but lacked sufficient energy to manage so large a school. Mr. J. "did little to cause the pupils to have a desire to attend." In Mr. M.'s school he observed that "the younger scholars seemed filled with an inordinate desire to exhibit their powers of locomotion."

The supervisor reserved his bitterest scorn for the school at Fairfield Center, taught by poor Mr. R.

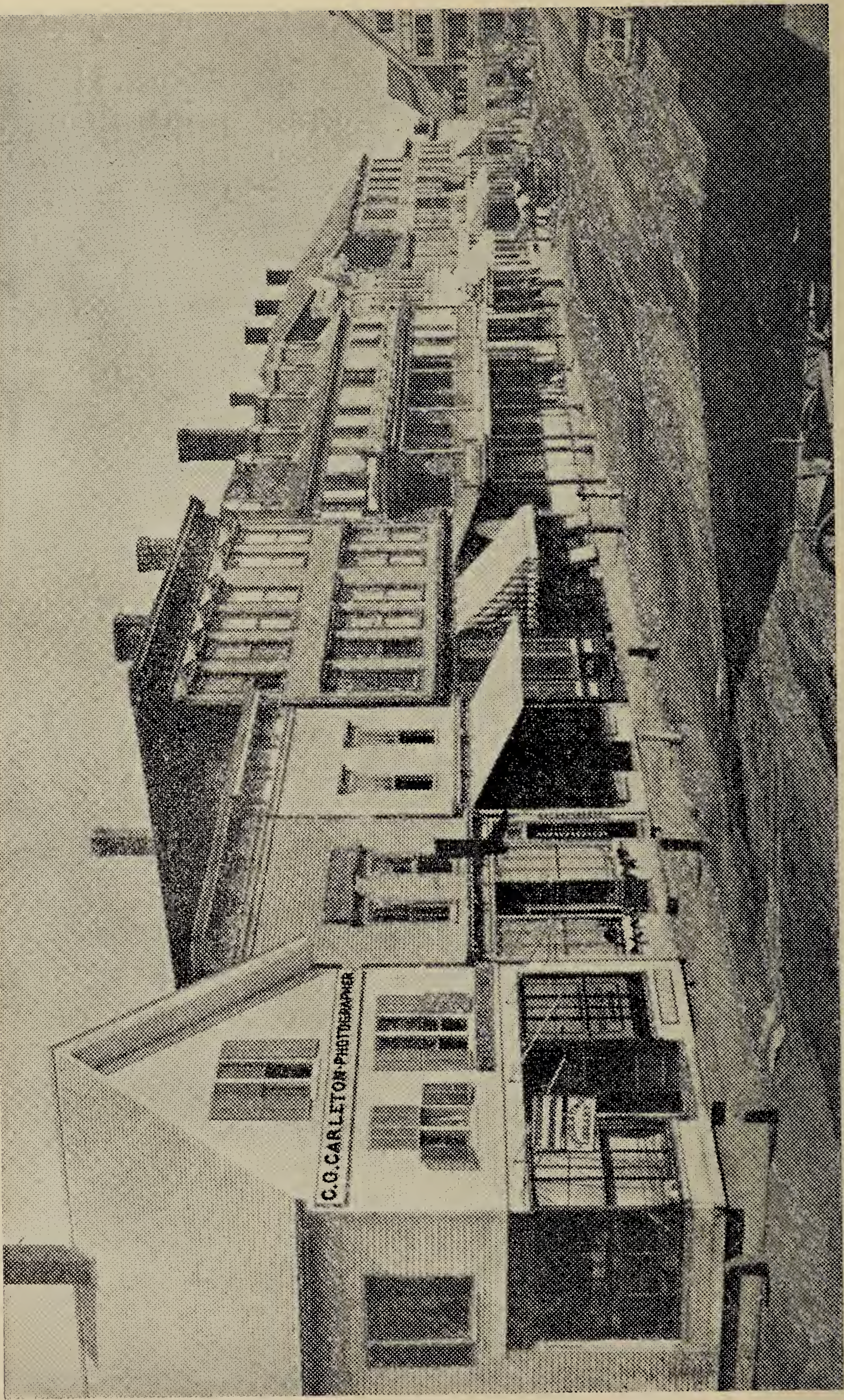
On our first visit, he said, we thought the school satisfactory. Having occasion to visit it again, on complaints from parents, we found it, as far as



COVERED BRIDGES at Waterville in 1856.



HIGH WATER—Junction of the Sebasticook and Kennebec Rivers at Winslow during the 1936 Flood.



MURDER SCENE—Main Street, Waterville, in 1847, showing the site of Waterville's first murder. The Williams House is the large building with six dormer windows. The view is looking south towards the present Lockwood Square traffic circle.

progress is concerned, making none. The scholars were driving around at random among their books and studies, like a ship afloat without helm or rudder. Satisfied that the school was doing nobody any good, we advised the teacher to leave, which he accordingly did.

Even when he praised a teacher, the supervisor tempered his praise with a slap on the wrist. Of Miss N.'s school at Ohio Hill he said: "The scholars rank far above the average in other districts. Yet Miss N. has one great fault as a teacher; she wants energy." Sometimes he found it hard to get information on which to base either praise or blame. "We understand," he complained, "that in District Number 7 a winter term was taught, but since we had no notice of its commencement or close, we did not visit it." He was also caustic about failure to learn earlier about District 10: "We have now received a register informing us that a winter term was kept there. It was our first notice of the existence of such a school, and we have no way of visiting schools of whose existence we are not aware."

That 1858 report is so filled with criticism of individual teachers that it omits all mention of ordinary school statistics. It gives no inkling of the total number of pupils in the Fairfield schools. Only occasionally does it give the enrollment in any one school. The whole operation appears to have been quite haphazard, and the supervisor had trouble enough to determine whether certain districts operated any school at all, to say nothing of noting the attendance. Although the report does not make clear the pay of all teachers, the average seems to have been about two dollars a week. In the summer all the teachers were women, while in the winter term all except six were men. Those male teachers were usually students from the colleges of Maine, both of which—there were then only Bowdoin and Colby—observed a long winter vacation for the express purpose of giving their students a chance to earn something toward college expenses by teaching a term in the common schools. If they got only two dollars a week besides their board, it would seem that they couldn't have accumulated much toward tuition. Perhaps not, but in 1858 tuition at Colby was only \$15 a term.

Let us now jump across from Fairfield to Albion, to see what was happening in the schools of that town at the outbreak of the Civil War. The committee's report for 1861 said: "The schools in town have been in a very flourishing condition. Not-

withstanding we have been visited by the malignant disease, diphtheria, and seventeen of our scholars from various districts have found a youthful grave, still the school interest has been kept up and all have done well."

For young people living today the awful toll of diseases now easily checked is almost incomprehensible. Long after 1861 diphtheria was a grim scourge. A haunting memory of my own boyhood is the death of a cousin, a few years younger than I, whose life medical science could easily have saved, had he caught the diphtheria only ten years later. In the cemetery lot of my mother's family in Bridgton lie the bodies of my grandmother's twin sisters, both taken by diphtheria at the age of ten. Today we are conscious of the increased average span of life, but we little realize the good boon of medical science to children. A hundred years ago any family felt peculiarly blessed if all the children lived to maturity. A striking feature of the old cemeteries is the number of tiny headstones.

Albion had fourteen school districts in 1861, each presided over by an agent. The statements about teachers are just as frank as those in the Fairfield report three years earlier. Mr. T., who taught in District Number 7 was characterized thus: "We think Mr. T. is a good scholar and strove for the advancement of his pupils; but being young and inexperienced, he failed to maintain the order essential for the best interests of the school." In District 13 the teacher admittedly tried to make the school interesting, but "the pupils did not respond very well." In a somewhat involved sentence, the report stated that Miss H., in District 14, tried hard to keep a good school, but "the pupils being rather roguish, progress was not sufficient from making the school appear backward at the end of the term."

Sometimes it was neither pupils nor teachers, but parents whom the committee blamed. This was the case in District 3, where "with so much ice, the fondness for skating rather than for school, and the parents seemingly willing to have it thus, the term was not very profitable." Like the Fairfield superintendent, the Albion committee was often critical of the school buildings. "If anyone could see the schoolhouse in District 5, we think they would wonder how school could keep going, much less make any improvement."

So much for Fairfield and Albion. What about Winslow? A generation later, in 1879, when Alden Bassett was supervisor of schools, his report shows some of Winslow's school districts in nearly as bad shape as those in Fairfield two decades earlier. The supervisor summed up the situation thus: "The success attending our schools is as good as can be expected when we consider that, in our eighteen districts, more than thirty different teachers have been employed. There is no uniformity in text books, even within the same school. In some of the schools the teachers have hurried their pupils over the pages, and they had little or no understanding of the principles."

If Albion parents allowed their children to skip school and go skating, certain Winslow parents showed even worse fault in their attitude toward the schools. "In a well regulated school," wrote Bassett, "government is one of the first requisites. Children sent to school are expected to obey the rules, which are essential to the good of the scholar and the school. On entering some of our schools, we find scholars who think their wishes should be consulted in regard to this and that. When they find, for once in their lives, that their feelings are not regarded, they complain to their parents, who think there is no one perfect but their own children. The parent sympathizes with the child, is sure the teacher is wrong, and won't send the child any longer to that teacher. The child stays at home and the parent thus breaks the state law."

The same frankness that characterized school reports in 1858 still prevailed in 1879. Of one district, Mr. Bassett said: "I was not told when the school would close, and I visited it only once. At that time the appearance of the school was not flattering to the teacher." In District 8 he found that "the school seemed well disposed, but was not studious, and I think but little proficiency was made in the studies." District 10 was even worse. "I was called to visit this school, and after examining it I thought it was not a profitable term, and I advised the teacher to close it." The schoolma'am in District 2, in spite of previous experience in two schools, "lacked judgment, and but little good resulted from this school." In Mr. Bassett's opinion, a teacher could be too helpful. "Miss H. in District 11 offered assistance to the pupils when they recited, so that they depended too much upon her. Consequently the examination was not satisfactory."

When one finds these early supervisors giving adverse opinions so frankly, one is inclined to pay attention to their words of praise. Mr. Bassett found his ideal teacher in Miss Minnie Smith, graduate of Coburn. "I visited the school near the beginning of the term and was pleased with the order and instruction. Both parents and scholars speak very highly of the teacher and the term was notably successful."

Although the earlier records in Fairfield and Albion are not clear about the teachers' salaries, the Winslow report of 1879 is definite. The highest paid teachers were three men, who received respectively eleven, eight and six dollars a week. Miss Smith was the highest paid woman, getting five dollars a week in cash and board valued at \$1.75 a week. The lowest paid teacher got only \$2.00 a week in cash and board at \$1.25. That poor girl may have gone hungry more than once, because the prevailing board rate in Winslow's other school districts was then two dollars a week. The majority of all the town's teachers received \$3.00 a week in cash and \$2.00 in board.

Fifteen years went by, and another supervisor put into print an opinion of the Winslow schools in 1894. Frank comments about the teachers were still called for. In District 5 the supervisor found the pupils making some progress, but the discipline lax. In District 6, even though the teacher had the advantage of a new schoolhouse, "her efforts as a teacher were not very successful." "In District 8," says the supervisor, "I expected a good term, but near the close I was aware that friendly feelings between teacher and scholars did not prevail." In District No. 6, the good start did not hold out. "At first the school was quiet and orderly and the pupils studious, but at the close of the term the scholars showed little interest and the teacher had lost control."

We wonder how many hard working, deserving young women were seriously injured by having their teaching reputations thus blasted in public print. Of course a few of them probably deserved rebuke, but we suspect many of them could have been saved by wise counsel. We must not blame the supervisors. They were not professional educators; they had other vocations which kept them busy and they could at best visit a school only a couple of times a term. Without advice in critical situations, with no one to turn to for help, the teacher in a one-room district school was completely on her own. If she succeeded, under

the handicaps of pupil revolt and parental indifference, the credit was all hers. The wonder is not that so many teachers got adverse criticism in the annual reports; the wonder is that any of them escaped it.

Alongside the public schools, grew and flourished the academies. After the founding of the first such school at Hallowell, they sprang up at Augusta and Waterville, at Vassalboro, and China, at Skowhegan and Norridgewock. On the Kennebec, Bloomfield Academy was the second oldest. Cony High School at Augusta began its existence as the Cony Female Academy in 1818. Three years later an academy was started at China village. There, Colby's celebrated martyr, Elijah Parish Lovejoy, once taught.

The story of Coburn Classical Institute at Waterville is typical of the way most of those academies operated. It was founded in 1829 as Waterville Academy, for the deliberate purpose of preparing young men to enter Waterville (later Colby) College. From the beginning, however, the school was co-educational, and only five years after its founding had an enrollment of 130 boys and 75 girls. In 1835 the tuition was \$3.25 per quarter for the common English studies, \$4.25 per quarter for the college preparatory course, which included both Greek and Latin, natural philosophy (as science was then called), mathematics, French, and moral philosophy. Room, board and washing could be obtained in town for \$1.50 per week. For the usual year of 32 weeks, the total cost, including board and room, did not exceed \$65.

In 1838 Waterville Academy encountered a powerful rival. The Universalists, the second strongest religious group in the community, established the Waterville Liberal Institute. The new school attracted so many students away from the academy, that in the two years from the summer of 1839 to the autumn of 1841, the latter closed its doors. Reopened that September, the academy had a precarious existence for two years until James H. Hanson became its principal in the fall of 1843.

A trite saying has it that an institution is but the lengthened shadow of a man. In large measure that is certainly true of Maine academies. Find one of those schools, private in their control but quasi-public in their operation and financial support—find one that enjoyed long, successful existence and you will find

behind it the shadow of a man. Not always was he principal or teacher. He may have been benefactor like Judge Cony; both benefactor and wise counselor, as Harvey D. Eaton was to Somerset Academy at Athens; a kind of unofficial head, as Governor Robie was at Gorham. More often he was actual headmaster of the school. When persons now fifty or more years old think of Hebron, they think of William E. Sargent, for Sargent *was* Hebron. Bridgton Academy was John Moody; Gould Academy was Frank Hanscom; Oak Grove was long synonymous with Jones, for several men of that name gave it distinguished leadership. Waterville Academy was known far and wide as Hanson's school. As late as 1920, at the time of the Colby Centennial, Dr. Hanson was referred to as if he still presided at the school, although he had died before any member of that college class of 1920 was born.

Hanson graduated from Waterville College in 1842, and the following year took charge of the academy. On the opening day only five pupils appeared. Before the end of the fall term he had built it up to thirty, and at the end of ten years the enrollment exceeded 300, a record reached by very few Maine academies before the Civil War.

Finding that the arduous task was undermining his health, Hanson resigned in 1854 to take a high school principalship elsewhere. In 1865, when the sponsoring college had received a new lease of life by a gift from Gardiner Colby, Hanson was persuaded to return to the academy as principal. There he remained for nearly thirty more years, working assiduously at his great educational task until a few days before his death in 1894. Granted an honorary doctorate by his alma mater, Dr. Hanson showed himself entitled to that award by his national reputation as a scholar, as well as by his fame as a headmaster. He edited several texts of Latin prose and poetry.

The endowment and renaming of Waterville Academy came about as the result of a triangular deal. In 1873, the trustees of Colby College, itself having taken the name of its benefactor, determined that it needed two other fitting schools besides the local academy. In 1874, Abner Coburn of Skowhegan offered to endow the Waterville school in the amount of \$50,000 provided an equal amount should be raised to endow two other institutions, one in the western and one in the eastern or northern part of the

state. After long and bitter dispute, Hebron Academy and Ricker Classical Institute were chosen as the other two schools. Later Higgins Classical Institute at Charleston became a fourth member of the group, and until comparatively recent years, Coburn, Hebron, Higgins and Ricker were officially Colby preparatory schools.

In 1883, when Governor Coburn decided to erect a school building for the Waterville Academy, in memory of his brother and nephew who had met tragic death by drowning, the trustees decided that his generous benefactions deserved permanent recognition, and they changed the name of the academy to Coburn Classical Institute.

Not only were principals like James Hanson sound teachers and recognized scholars. They were forced to be competent business managers. The trustees left them pretty much alone. They had to collect the fees, pay the teachers, purchase all equipment, and if anything was left over at the end of the year, that was the principal's salary. At the end of Dr. Hanson's first year he found himself \$40 behind. But in the days of big enrollment in the 1870's and 1880's he could close each year's accounts in black ink.

At the time of the school's fiftieth anniversary, Dr. Burrage, distinguished Baptist historian, said:

Waterville Academy owes its fame and its usefulness to its distinguished principal. What kind of labor has he not performed? What work did he ever ask another to do which perhaps he might better do himself? When other men wrought six hours in the classroom, he wrought twelve. And when that long, weary work was over, the midnight hours saw him still at his task. Too poor to employ the needed assistance, but too conscientious to leave anything undone, he toiled on, seeking no reward but the satisfaction of doing his whole duty. Only a man of unusual physique, as well as unusual mental and moral qualities could continue such labor and not break under the strain. We talk about the need of endowment, and we do need it. But let us gratefully recognize the fact that in our principal we already have the school's best endowment.

Well known is the story of the marvelous development of Colby College from Jeremiah Chaplin's seven theological students to the nationally known liberal arts college of eighty instructors and a thousand students, using twenty-five beautiful new buildings on Mayflower Hill. But well known as the story is, it has a place in this chapter because Colby is the Kennebec's

only college. Bowdoin is on the Androscoggin, Bates is near the same river, and the University of Maine stands beside the Stillwater. All are excellent institutions, bringing honor to the state. Colby is only one of the four, but she is the only one on the Kennebec. Her yesterdays are a vital part of Kennebec yesterdays.

Determined to have an institution for the training of their clergy, the Baptists of Maine obtained a charter for the Maine Theological and Literary Institution from the Massachusetts legislature in 1813. With the charter went a grant of a township of land, six miles square, in what is now Argyle, fifteen miles above Bangor on the Penobscot. It was obviously no place to establish a theological school. As late as 1860, a traveler in that region recorded that he was "kept awake all night by the howling of wolves." When the citizens of Waterville subscribed a thousand dollars, if the trustees would establish the institution there, the offer was gratefully accepted.

In June, 1818, Jeremiah Chaplin, accompanied by his wife, four children, and seven young men who were studying theology with him at Danvers, boarded the sloop *Hero* at Boston and sailed for the Kennebec. At Hallowell they changed to one of the river's famous longboats, which drew up at its wharf in Waterville on Thursday morning, June 25, 1818—a memorable day in the history of Colby College and the city of Waterville. Mrs. Chaplin, in her diary, expressed delight at the cordial reception, and commented that the inhabitants "do not seem to be such ignorant, uncultivated beings as we were led to suppose."

In a little frame house where the Elmwood Hotel now stands, Dr. Chaplin began to hold classes. Certain that the intent of the founders had always been to have a college of liberal arts as well as a theological school, he led the movement by which the trustees petitioned the very first legislature of the new state of Maine, in 1820, for the right "to grant such degrees as are usually conferred by universities established for the education of youth." Under the Massachusetts charter, the institution could not confer degrees, but after 1820, when the Maine legislature granted the petition, it became a recognized degree-granting college of liberal arts. A year later, the name was changed to Waterville College.

That Maine charter of 1820 contained a section in which Colby men and women have taken justifiable pride. It was a day

of narrow sectarian beliefs, when each denomination was expected to guard jealously its own affairs, including the instruction of its youth. Baptists, however, were a sect whose very existence rested on tolerance and the right of private conscience. In that cause Roger Williams, under banishment from Boston, had endured the rigors of a backwoods winter and had established his free colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. It was in conformity with the best Baptist tradition, therefore, that the charter for the new institution in Maine laid down the provision that "no student belonging or who may hereafter belong to said Institution, shall be denied admission or be deprived of any privileges, or forfeit any aid, on the ground that his interpretations of the scriptures differ from those which are contained in the articles of faith adopted or to be adopted by the Institution." The notable feature of that provision is that it not only demanded tolerance of religious differences at the time, but forbade forever the imposing of any sectarian restrictions.

Very early in its career the college found that tolerance paid dividends. An incident that has never before appeared in print, but that should surely be added to the college archives, came to the attention of the present writer only two years ago. It is told in a letter, long forgotten until it was turned up by Professor Gwilyn Roberts of the State Teachers College at Farmington. The letter was written in 1828 by the Reverend Sylvanus Cobb, distinguished leader of the Maine Universalists and at that time minister of the Waterville Universalist Church.

No two sects could be farther apart in theological belief than the Baptists and the Universalists. Most Baptist members regarded Universalists as little better than unconverted heathen; the Universalists looked upon all Baptists as bigoted religious snobs. Sylvanus Cobb represented Waterville in the legislature when, on February 1, 1828, he wrote his wife from Portland, where the legislature then convened. Cobb was concerned about a bill for the support of Waterville College. "My duty and my honor," he wrote, "require me to take a bold stand at this time in reasonable favor of the college." Cobb, in spite of his prominence, was not a trustee of Waterville College and had no direct obligation to it. Here, moreover, was a chance to take a slap at the hated Baptists. Cobb did no such thing. Instead, he set to work in behalf of the institution.

Squire Timothy Boutelle, Waterville's leading citizen and promoter of the college, was a member of the state senate. Cobb conferred with him, and together they planned a campaign. Cobb wrote to his wife: "Mr. Boutelle calculated yesterday morning on leaving in the afternoon, but the resolve in favor of Waterville College took such a turn that he concluded to tarry one day longer. The resolve provided that \$2000 should be granted annually for three years, the same amount they have been receiving and which expires the present year. Mr. Smith of Newfield moved to amend the resolve by adding a section appropriating \$20,000 per year for the use of common schools. His design is to encumber the resolve for the college so that it will not pass. I had no idea the Smith amendment would prevail, and so made no remarks, but it did prevail. I then persuaded one who had voted in the affirmative to move a reconsideration, and thus I have been engaged in arguing the subject and the reconsideration has succeeded. Monday next is assigned for taking up the resolve. By looking into the situation of the college, I find that its very continuance depends on some further assistance, and I am bound by my oath to support the constitution of the state. That constitution declares it shall be the duty of the legislature to support the college which it has chartered."

The combined efforts of Sylvanus Cobb and Timothy Boutelle were successful. The appropriation was passed, and little Waterville College was able to keep open. Thanks to a Universalist, the Baptist College was saved.

What did it cost to attend Waterville College in the early days? At first, the tuition was \$4.00 a quarter, board and room \$1.00 a week, and wood \$1.50 a cord. In 1824 the college billed the Massachusetts Baptist Education Society for \$143 to pay a half year's tuition and room rent of thirteen theological students at \$11 apiece. In 1825, President Chaplin wrote to an inquirer that a student's necessary annual expenses amounted to \$84.32, made up of the following items: Board at nine shillings a week for 38 weeks \$50.57, tuition and room rent \$22.00, wood \$2.25, oil \$2.00, use of classical books \$6.00, repairs 50 cents, and tax for Commencement Dinner \$1.00.

The Maine Register for 1856 listed six faculty positions at Waterville College, one of which had recently been made vacant by the resignation of George Keeley, professor of mathematics.

Robert Pattison was then president, and James T. Champlin, who was to follow as the institution's Civil War president, was professor of Latin and Greek. Samuel K. Smith, not to be confused with the author of *America*, who had been a teacher here twenty years earlier, was professor of rhetoric and librarian. Charles E. Hamlen, a man widely versed in several sciences and real founder of Colby's important department of geology, was listed as professor of chemistry and natural geography. There was one lone man of instructor rank, Hobart Richardson in Greek and mathematics.

To gain admission to the college a hundred years ago, an applicant had to possess a "thorough acquaintance with English, Latin, and Greek grammar, Caesar's *Commentaries*, Sallust, Virgil, Cicero's *Select Orations*, Latin Prosody, the making of Latin, the Gospels of the Greek Testament, Jacob's Greek Reader, Ancient and Modern Geography, Vulgar and Decimal Fractions, Proportions, the Doctrine of Roots and Powers, and algebra so far as to be able to solve equations of the second degree." Applicants were examined on Monday and Tuesday before commencement or on the first and second days of the fall term.

Tuition in 1856 had risen from \$22 to \$35 a year. Board ranged from \$1.00 to \$1.75 a week. Fuel, washing and lights for the year cost \$12, and incidental expenses were estimated at five dollars. For a whole year at the college the cost ranged from \$90 to \$120, covering 39 weeks. Books, clothing and travel added a bit more, but in many cases the last item was of no account. Travel was chiefly by "shank's mare." Much later than 1856, that was the mode of transportation between home and college for such students as Harvey Eaton of Cornville and Herbert Lord of Rockland.

During its first half century the college tried various experiments to increase enrollment. It once started a wood-working shop, a forerunner of manual training, which was intended to give employment to students and at the same time manufacture articles for college use and for sale. Costing much more than it took in, it was pronounced a failure and was soon abandoned. In 1856, another plan was tried. A partial course was introduced, into which were admitted men "of suitable age and acquisitions, wishing to fit themselves for mechanical, agricultural, or any of the other active pursuits of life." For one or

more years those practical-minded individuals could select their own studies, could not have a degree, but would be granted a certificate when they left the institution. Gardiner Colby's gift of \$50,000, coming at a time when war had reduced enrollment to a precarious low, laid a sound financial foundation that has continued to the present day. Grateful trustees renamed the college Colby.

Because this book is restricted to a glimpse of Kennebec Yesterdays, it cannot pay deserved attention to the college that has risen on Mayflower Hill, two miles distant from the old campus. For old-timers, however, it is interesting to note that Colby men and women owe that new college plant almost entirely to the man who was Colby's president from 1929 to 1942, and who in the 1890's had been a successor of Dr. Hanson as principal of Coburn. If the old Coburn was the extended shadow of Dr. Hanson, both the later Coburn and the new Colby are extended shadows of Franklin Winslow Johnson.

The most important factor in any school or in any college classroom was the teacher. Throughout the nineteenth century, American education valued as its symbol Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a student on the other. But long before any school opened its doors in the Kennebec Valley, books played a part in education.

So much has been written about the prevalence of the three R's in the curriculum that we forget the significance of geography. That subject was taught in every Maine school before 1825. One of the commonest texts was the Malte-Brun School Geography, published in Hartford, Connecticut. Its foreword says: "The common method of teaching geography requires the feeble intellect of childhood, with a small stock of ideas and a very limited vocabulary, immediately to comprehend the solar system, a task which demands the energy of a mature mind. In this book the pupil is more sensibly made to begin with the spot where he lives. He is then led to adjacent towns, his whole native state, his own nation, and then to foreign lands."

Makers of modern school geographies pride themselves on the objective honesty with which they depict all places on earth just as those places exist. That attitude didn't trouble the editor of the Malte-Brun Geography, not for a minute. Probably he was an arm-chair geographer, who had never been west of the

Alleghenies. Of Greenland, he said: "The people are of the same race as the Eskimos, dull in intellect and feeling. Children bury their parents to get rid of the trouble of maintaining them." How wrong that picture is, every reader and listener of Maine's great authority on Greenland, Don MacMillan, is fully aware. Brazil had an assured future, according to the editor, but of the great fertile plain of the LaPlata, then part of the United Provinces and soon to become the Argentine Republic, he had only this to say: "Immense herds of cattle may be seen in a wild state on the plains. The people take these animals with a rope called a lasso." Although he admits that Buenos Aires is a sizeable town, he says, "Few ships can reach it, because the river is full of rocks and shallows. Large vessels must unload ten miles from the town."

Turning to Europe, the editor finds the people of Lapland so attached to their country that they prefer its dreary, frozen wastes to any other land. He adds: "This doubtless arises from ignorance and force of habit." It is interesting to learn that the Turks are "believers in Mahomet, an Arabian who lived 1200 years ago. He called himself the prophet of God, and under the pretended influence of Divine inspiration, he wrote a book called the Koran. Such are the indolent habits of the Turks that even a carpenter sits at his work and holds the board upright with his toes while he saws it."

When we remember that an Albion boy, a Colby graduate who taught at both Waterville and China academies, laid down his life because he continued to publish anti-slavery articles in his paper, it is interesting to see what at least one geography told the children of the Kennebec Valley about the Negro, in that year 1837, when Elijah Parish Lovejoy was slain. Of the colored people, the Malte-Brun Geography says: "The physical properties of Africa perpetuate the indolent levity and childish carelessness for which the race is well known. Twenty days' work in a year gives them enough rice and millet to feed them. Yet their gross taste is not disgusted with the flesh of the elephant, even when it is full of vermin. They feed on the eggs of the crocodile and on his musky flesh, and their favorite food of all is the monkey. Such is the Negro. Having few wants, and these easily satisfied, he lives a life of indolence and gaiety. A stranger to our ambitions, he looks on life as a brief interval to be enjoyed while it

lasts. He is unable to learn the simplest arts, as witness the fact after hundreds of years of opportunity he has not yet tamed the elephant." Shades of Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, and Ralph Bunche! No wonder, with that kind of teaching, generations of Americans grew up with just as firm belief in their own racial superiority as Hitler developed in his day.

Before the building of Forts Halifax and Western permitted populous settlements, and therefore schools, along the Kennebec, the *New England Primer* had gradually fallen into disuse, and the era of the McGuffey *Readers* had not yet dawned. There were plenty of reading books, however. Almost everybody who owned a printing press seems to have produced at least one. In general format they were all alike—filled with accounts of children designed to set noble and beautiful examples for young readers. The Little Rollos, the Little Lord Fauntleroy, the sweet little girls who were never cross and never got their dresses dirty—insufferable prigs of every sort paraded across the pages. Probably the young readers never thought of them as prigs; they just didn't like "goody-goodies."

One of the commonly used readers a hundred and fifty years ago, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was published by the firm that through all the years has owned the rich publication rights in the Webster dictionaries, the G. and C. Merriam Company of Springfield, Massachusetts. In 1803, the Merriams brought out *The Understanding Reader*, compiled by Daniel Adams, "A work designed for the improvement of youth in reading, in definition of words, and in spelling." The selections are of wide variety. Animals are given due recognition, with articles on the beaver, the camel, the lion, the tiger, and the elephant. There are five essays on "The Hostilities of Animals," clearly meant to convince the reader that the most rapacious of all animals is man. From the Bible is taken the entire Book of Esther, Paul's defense before Agrippa, and the story of the Resurrection. Some of the articles are distinctly practical, as "Boiling Potatoes" or "A Surprising Cure for the Gout." But by far the largest number of selections are moral essays, such as "Life is a Flower," "Rules for Moderating Our Anger," "Frailty of Life," and "Neighbor Winrow's Advice to Haymakers on Drinking."

One copy of the Adams reader belonged to a long forgotten youngster named Sam Bancroft. On the fly-leaf, in flowing hand

is written: "Samuel Bancroft's book and property. Price 2/6. January 8, 1811." It is common to find an appropriate rhyme inscribed somewhere between the covers of these old school books. On the back fly-leaf Sam had written: "Steel not this book for fear of shame, for in it is the owner's name." Here in this book, one of whose major claims was that it taught spelling, Sam Bancroft had spelled steal "steel."

Chapter XVII

BED AND BREAKFAST

“**W**HERE are you going to stop in Waterville?” one young man asked the other, as the Skowhegan stage jogged south along the Kennebec.

“My father says there’s only one good hotel in Waterville,” was the reply, “and that’s the Williams House.”

“I’m Ed Mathews,” said the questioner. “I’ve just been buying cattle up the river. A fellow up at Solon is going to collect them for me and drive them down to Waterville. Then I’ll put them with another drove I’m bring over from Albion and drive the whole bunch down to the Brighton market. Now tell me who you are.”

“I’m Tom Flint from Anson and, just as I told you, I’m on my way to Waterville to study medicine with a doctor down there. He’s young, but he already has a wide reputation. My father says Dr. Coolidge will go far. Perhaps you’ve heard of my father, Senator Flint of Somerset County.”

“Indeed I have heard of him,” answered Matthews. “In fact I was down at Augusta last winter and heard him make a mighty good speech on the railroads. And do you know, pretty soon we’re going to have the railroad come into Waterville. That will be a big day for our town.”

So it was that, on a summer day in 1845, the Skowhegan stage brought into Waterville two young men whose fate was to be tragically linked with that of the doctor whose name one of them had mentioned. That story, however, must be reserved for the next chapter. Just now we are concerned with the place where young Flint proposed to stop.

The Williams House was one of the better inns of the stage-coach days. With somewhat the appearance of a New England

mansion, it stood on Waterville's Main Street, opposite the head of Silver Street. It was a big wooden building, said to have been built originally for a tavern and operated for several years by Levi Dow. A few years before our two young men met on the Skowhegan stage coach, it had been taken over by Cyrus Williams, and was called the Williams House. Right through the middle of it ran an archway, through which teams drove to the big stable in the rear. The inn needed a big stable, for it was not only a stage stop for change of horses, but also rented teams to travelers and townsfolk.

By 1847, the Williams House had become known, not merely as a stopping place for travelers, but quite as much as a resident boarding house. Before Tom Flint arrived, several business bachelors of the town had room and meals at the place, including Dr. Coolidge, with whom Flint was to study medicine. The landlord's charming daughter was perhaps one of the hotel's attractions for the town's bachelors.

Professor William Mathews, Waterville's most prolific author, some of whose books enjoyed a sale of more than 75,000 copies, was still living at the age of 84 when Waterville celebrated her hundredth anniversary in 1902. Born in Waterville in 1818, he had varied recollections of the early days. Of this old tavern he wrote: "The arrival of the mail-stage from Augusta, which was at about eleven o'clock each forenoon, was an important event of my boyhood. As the stage rounded the bend in Silver Street, north of my father's house, the driver drew forth his long horn and blew a loud, vigorous blast. As the stage stopped at Levi Dow's tavern on Main Street, opposite the head of Silver, all the loafers of the village flocked there to learn the latest news. The passengers went into the tavern for dinner, and the stage drove through the archway to the stable, where the horses were changed and the vehicle prepared to move on toward Bangor after the passengers had been fed."

For more than a hundred years Waterville's most famous hostelry has been the Elmwood. How did it happen that Senator Flint did not tell his son to go there? The answer is that it was not until five years after Tom Flint came to Waterville that Seavey and Williams opened the Elmwood House. On the site of the Elmwood there originally stood a farmhouse built by James L. Wood. It was in that house that Jeremiah Chaplin held the first

classes of what was to become Colby College. In 1837 Deacon Abial Follansbee enlarged the building and opened Waterville's first temperance hotel. He sold to Ivory Low, who operated the tavern, but without the temperance qualification, until 1849, when John L. Seavey took it over. The next year, in partnership with Williams, he again enlarged the house and named it the Elmwood.

We do not know why Senator Flint favored the Williams House rather than Ivory Low's tavern at the junction of Main and College Streets. Perhaps Landlord Williams did serve, as he contended, the best meals on the Kennebec. It is more likely that the senator and the genial boniface were staunch political friends. At any rate, young Flint drove right by the Low tavern, down past the brick house on Main Street to which Deacon Follansbee had moved his temperance hotel, and did not leave the stage until it drew up in front of the Williams House.

In 1855, Waterville had three places which the Maine Register then listed as public houses: the Williams House, the Elmwood House operated by John Seavey, and the Waterville House, whose host was M. R. Pishon. In that same year, almost exactly a hundred years ago, Augusta had no less than eight taverns, a number explained by the prominence of that town as the state capital. The now venerable Augusta House, then in its infancy, headed the list under the proprietorship of Harrison Baker. The Central House was operated by John Johnson, the Cushnoc House by Oren Rowe, the Franklin House by J. B. Trull, and the Kennebec House by John R. Daly. Stephen Scruton, George Ricker and George Young ran respectively the Mansion House, the Stanley House and the Union House. Augusta's famous Hotel North had not yet been opened.

At Vassalboro, the Hopkins House presented genial landlord Prince Hopkins, while in the same town Joseph Wing dignified his tavern by the name Stage House. Anson had the Somerset Hotel with N. H. Brown as host; China had the China House at the village and the South China House, run by Sabin Lewis, at the other end of the lake. There was also a tavern across the river from Waterville, appropriately called the Halifax House.

Continuing up the river, the traveler found, at Kendalls Mills, Daniel Bunker's Fairfield House and C. M. Plummer's Newhall House. At Skowhegan, his bed for the night could be at

Turner and Hill's Stage House; at Solon he was made welcome at Foster Williams' Caratunk House. The 1856 Register mentions no public house at either Bingham or Caratunk, but the traveler was not without lodging if he continued up the river beyond Solon. Far up at The Forks, where the Dead River joins the Kennebec, Mr. W. Burnham was operating a full century ago The Forks Hotel.

The registers of old time hotels reveal interesting items, especially when they are illuminated by historical interpretation. Such is the register kept at The Forks Hotel from 1872 through 1874. As long ago as 1872, a few people from out of the state came to The Forks for hunting and fishing. Summer, rather than spring or fall, was the season of their appearance, according to the records of Landlord A. D. Murray of The Forks Hotel. Whether G. F. Seavey of Boston, who registered on May 13, 1872, together with General R. B. Shepherd, of Skowhegan, came on pleasure or business, we do not know, but two other men who registered on July 16, were clearly not at The Forks for business. They were Charles Theodore Russell, Jr., and William E. Russell, who set down their residence as Harvard College, Cambridge. Vacationing also were G. E. White and mother of Boston, who first registered on August 17, for supper, lodging and breakfast, but who came again on August 20. On the next day Miss L. A. Davis of New York City put her spencerian signature in the register. Already, The Forks was becoming a vacation region.

The majority of entries in the register are not vacationers, however, but persons engaged in the region's biggest business, lumbering. From the big operators to the husky men who cut the timber and ran the drives down the streams, they put up again and again at The Forks Hotel. The very first entry in the book is "Sam L. Whitten and two horses, Skowhegan." On the same day came H. Whipple of Solon, with one horse. On March 13, W. B. Snow of Skowhegan showed up with four oxen. The next day appeared a prominent lumberman from down the river at Kendalls Mills, A. Drew. By the middle of March, business was really picking up. On the 16th came F. Stewart with four men and seven horses; on the 18th William Grant and nine men; on the 19th O. Clark, with nine men, ten oxen and two horses.

Some of the Kennebec place names are interestingly recorded. Jackman is always referred to as Jackmantown, Fairfield

Village as Kendalls Mills, Oakland as West Waterville. There are several references to a river variously spelled *Main* and *Maine*. It referred to that part of the Kennebec between The Forks and Moosehead Lake. Other up-river places that appear by name—some of them changed or completely abandoned during the past eighty years—are Coburn or Coburntown, Dinsmore, Square Town, Burnham Depot, Sandy Bay, and Cleaveland. Moose River is invariably spelled *Moos*, and Parlin Pond is Parlen. For their addresses, scores of patrons put down simply the word Canada.

Very few people actually signed the register themselves. That spencerian signature of Miss Davis's was an exception. The proprietor or one of his employees evidently wrote in the names, for whole pages appear in the same handwriting. The spellings are sometimes fantastic. St. Albans appears as one word, *Stalbons*, Belgrade is *Bellgrad*, Waterville is *Watervil*. Caratunk is spelled at least five different ways. But always Landlord Murray found some distinguishing way to designate his guests, as when he put down "four of Coburn's men" or "Cleaveland's teamster." Occasionally, when a guest signed the register personally, he showed off a bit. James Welch, on June 8, 1874 signed as "Best master driver on Dead River."

On April 9, 1872, Landlord Murray gave a ball, for which the hotel register duly recorded the out-of-town attendance. This is the first record of women ever stopping over night at the hotel, though many of the fair sex came afterward. The Ham family was much in evidence at the ball. There were Roscoe Ham and lady, Moses Ham and lady, Charles Ham and lady. Joseph Durgin and lady came up from Bingham. There were Fords and Taylors, Halls and Williamses, Dudleys and Thompsons, Fardys and Smiths. Only one couple stayed over night, E. Hall and lady. We wonder how much quiet sleep that one woman patron got that night, for lodged in the same building were eleven lumbermen, just emerging from a long winter in the woods, and most of them thirsty. The Forks Hotel must have been a noisy place that night.

Indian guests were not unknown, though seldom named. On May 22, 1873, among the guests were "E. L. Tucker and one Indian, East Branch." Nor was the landlord inclined to bother about the names of French Canadian woodsmen. Such notations as "John Simpson and two Frenchmen," "Henry Locke, four

oxen, and Frenchman," appear again and again. There are few reference to children, but in July, 1872, appeared S. M. Perkins of New York with two boys. What a time those Manhattan youngsters must have had on the edge of the Maine wilderness eighty years ago.

When the spring drive was under way, The Forks Hotel was a busy place, but there is no evidence that the little village saw the wild carousing and the lavish spending that made Bangor notorious every spring. Landlord Murray tried to operate a temperance hotel, but probably he had as much difficulty as any other Maine proprietor of those days in keeping his inn free from bootleg liquor. The fact that whole families, like the Wymans of Malden, Massachusetts—a father, mother and two daughters—came for successive summers proves that The Forks Hotel was a high-grade, respectable hostelry.

That hotel at the junction of the rivers was by no means the northernmost public house on the Kennebec. As long ago as 1832, the *Maine Register and United States Calendar* listed Baker's House at Parlin Pond, Holden's House at Moose River, Hilton's House at Main Branch of the Penobscot, Highlands House at Canada Line, and Jona's Camp. At that time the last incorporated town on the Canada Road was Moscow, where the hotel was called Temple's Tavern. The 1832 *Register* contains no mention of Jackman. It tells us: "Between Jona's Camp and Owen's are several log houses, some of which are tenanted and some abandoned. The traveler will find the settlers disposed to afford every accommodation in their power. Owen's House, the next stop after Jona's Camp, is sixty-six miles from Quebec. The traveler pursues his course on the easterly bank of the Chaudiere, through a delightful country, and over excellent road. The settlements are of French origin and are connected throughout, more so than in the interior of our own state. Moreover the people are in every respect hospitable and entertaining to the traveler."

The many stopping places from Skowhegan to Quebec were made possible and prosperous by the building of the Canada Road. It was built in 1828, under the supervision of Jim Jackman of Solon. Before that date, cattle raised in the settlements above Skowhegan were driven the long, hard journey over the roads south, through Waterville and western Maine towns, on to

the big market at Brighton, Massachusetts. For instance, in 1817, when Abner Coburn, later to be Maine's distinguished governor and benefactor of Coburn Institute in Waterville, was fourteen years old, his father collected a drove of cattle in the settlements above Skowhegan, and sent young Abner as one of the drovers, trudging on foot from Skowhegan to Boston and back home again. Not until Uncle Jim Jackman cleared the Canada Road from The Forks to the Canadian line, and a road was built south from the St. Lawrence to meet it, were Somerset cattle driven to the nearer and more profitable Quebec market.

It was not cattle, however, but silver that gave the needed final spurt to building the Canada Road. Hard money—the only money people could trust—was scarce in the United States. It was difficult for cattle drovers to get cash payment in the Brighton market. Quebec merchants were ready to pay in specie, and the silver coins of either Britain or Canada were readily accepted by New England banks. Sumner Whipple of Solon, recording his childhood memories, wrote of an incident he recalled as happening soon after the opening of the road. "The Humphreys, then living in Skowhegan, dealt in horses and cattle. As they returned from driving the stock to Quebec, they stopped at Father's overnight. When they came in, they brought their saddle bags. In the evening, in front of the big fire place, they talked of the success which was in those saddle bags, all in silver. We children had to see if we could lift it. I, being the oldest of a large family, could do so, though a thousand dollars in silver weighs approximately sixty-four pounds. But when we got about half way down the line of children, none of them could get a bag off the floor."

When Jim Jackman had pushed the road close to the Canadian line and was finally getting an opening wide enough for a team to go through, the crew ran short of rum. Recognizing that such a shortage must be rectified or he would lose his crew, Uncle Jim sent a man into Canada for a supply. When the messenger returned with a full barrel, there was rejoicing in the camp. It was a very hot day, making all the more arduous the back-breaking work of removing roots, stumps and boulders in those days when human muscles and the strength of oxen had to serve as bulldozers. The men demanded frequent rest, but Jim Jackman kept them going with the admonition: "Boys, we'll take another drink of rum and get right back to work, because

we've got to finish this road in a hurry. We've just got to get the silver through. We need that silver mighty bad."

Maine had many famous hotels outside the Kennebec Valley. One was the United States Hotel in Portland. The building still stands, facing Monument Square, now housing the Edwards and Walker Hardware Company. On his frequent trips to Portland, to deal with the wholesale grocers, my father invariably stopped at the United States Hotel as long as it did business. For many years it was, indeed, Maine's most famous hostelry. Its opening in 1842 was a memorable event. In the *Portland Gazette*, Editor George Illsley recorded it thus: "Messrs. Dunlap and Kingsbury have taken the establishment long known as the Cumberland House and have rechristened it the United States Hotel. They have repapered, repainted, recarpeted and refurnished it—in a word, have regenerated the whole place so as to make it rank A Number One. Those who want regalement, refreshment, repose and reclusion, should drop in on our friends Dunlap and Kingsbury. It was our privilege to be invited to the opening dinner which they gave to prominent citizens and all representatives of the local press. It was a magnificent affair—a menu of twelve courses and the finest decorations. Take our word for it, as the man said of the fat oyster, it opened rich."

In 1860, newly opened was a hotel that I remember very well. As late as 1920 it still stood at the corner of Congress and Preble streets in Portland. It was named the Preble House in honor of Portland's famous Commodore Preble, and its 1860 announcement read: "The Preble House is now completed and open for the accommodation of transient and permanent boarders. It is the largest hotel in the state, possessing all the modern improvements and is first class in every appointment. Charles H. Adams, proprietor."

Other announcements in a Maine business directory of 1860 refer to some well known hotels. Harrison Baker, proprietor of the Augusta House, assured the public that "porters are in attendance to convey passengers and baggage to the House from all railroad and steamboat stations free of charge." U. M. Thayer operated the Kennebec House, also in Augusta, which he assured patrons had been "newly fitted up, enlarged, and elegantly furnished, and possesses all modern improvements for the con-

venience and comfort of guests." Thayer was especially proud of his large stable and that his inn was a regular stop for all stages.

Up in Farmington was a hotel that I used to know when I was a college student early in this century. It was the Stoddard House, where the Colby Glee Club stayed over night once a year when they gave a concert in Farmington. In 1860, its original proprietor, S. F. Stoddard, was still living. In his directory advertisement, Stoddard splashed his rhetoric: "This hotel, situated on Broadway, in the beautiful village of Farmington, the shire town of Franklin County, and the terminus of the Androscoggin Railroad, is a sumptuously attractive resort at all seasons of the year. Here the traveler will find rest from his journey and comfort for body and mind. Mr. Stoddard, with an experience of twelve years as landlord and proprietor, is competent and eager to give his best personal attention to his patrons' most fastidious wants. Guests are taken to and from the depot free of charge."

One of the most lavish hotel ads appearing in the 1860 directory is that of the Bethel House, on the west side of the common in the town of Bethel. W. J. Lovejoy, the proprietor, announced that he had recently remodeled and refurnished the whole house. "A carriage is in constant attendance at the depot to convey passengers to the House. Mr. Lovejoy is also agent for the British and American Express Company. He also runs a mail coach from Bethel to Errol, N. H., via Newry, Grafton, Upton, Umbagog Lake, and Cambridge, on Tuesday and Friday of each week."

Another well remembered tavern is the Thorndike Hotel in Rockland. Back in 1860 it had an entrance at the corner of Sea Street, as well as one on Main Street. In its day it has housed many a prominent American, including President Grant, Commodore Vanderbilt, and the elder John D. Rockefeller. Other hotels—some of them long since forgotten—whose advertisements appear in the 1860 directory were the Columbian House at Bath, the Penobscot House at Hampden Corner, the York Hotel in Saco, the Eveleth House at Winterport, the Maine Hotel at Damariscotta, and the Mansion House at Morrill's Corner.

Scarcely a village in all Maine was too small to have a tavern in 1860. Little Alna had the Simpson House, Athens the Wesewonset House, and Canaan the Carrabasset House. As one rides today through the Maine town of Brighton, he sees little

except woodland and abandoned farms; yet, a hundred years ago, this town had a hotel, the Wade House. The tiny village of Dixmont had the Kimball House, and at Searsmont, the village later made famous as the Fraternity of Ben Ames Williams' novels, was the McFarland House. A lot of Maine people today couldn't possibly locate the town of Charlotte, but in 1860 it had a tavern, the Sprague House. There was the Fuller House at Lagrange, the Lee House at Lee, the Stage House at Liberty, the Gilman House at Mercer, the Lemon Stream House at New Portland, the Cottage House at New Vineyard, the Bates Hotel at Norridgewock, the Piscataquis Hotel at Parkman, the Eagle House at Readfield, the Central House at Vienna, the Elm House at Weld and the Gray House at Whitefield. Altogether, in 1860, there were more than 450 listed public houses in Maine.

One of the most interesting of the old taverns has much of its interior still preserved, although it has long been used as a private house. Situated at Benton Falls, it was once called the Reed Tavern, although its original proprietor always insisted it was just his home, where he welcomed the traveling public. In fact, legend has it that so many travellers stopped and claimed his hospitality that his relatives insisted he was a poor business man if he did not take advantage of it by charging for board and lodging. At any rate, he put out a tavern sign, still preserved today, as is the original structure of the spacious rooms, by the present owner, Mr. Richard Dyer, Director of Public Relations at Colby College.

Nearly a hundred and fifty years old, the Reed tavern has intact the old bar room with its array of fancy shaped bottles and flasks, the big second-story assembly room with deacons' seats along the wall. There were held religious meetings, political rallies, forum discussions, and at least one town meeting. On one room is the original wall paper, brought from France.

Another old tavern, with its high ceilings, great oak beams, and wide pine flooring, is the Brown Tavern at Riverside, on Route 201 between Augusta and Vassalboro. It was here that one of Maine's most remarkable landlords held sway in the early nineteenth century. Storekeeper, operator of longboat, builder of sailing craft, dealer in lumber and potash, as well as tavern keeper, Squire Brown of Brown's Corner became famous in two ways, first for his public service and second for his portrait.

Brown's public service was the founding of the state's first insane hospital at Augusta. Few people know that this was made possible, not by public funds, but by private subscriptions, of which Brown's ten thousand dollars was the first.

As for the portrait, that is quite a story. When Brown died, the trustees of the insane hospital wanted his portrait. Although a man of wealth and prominence, Benjamin Brown had never been vain enough to have his portrait painted. His daughter in Philadelphia, hearing of the trustees' request, recalled that Judge James Dascombe of Skowhegan greatly resembled her father. So up she came, all the way from Philadelphia, bringing a ruffled shirt, a velvet coat, high collar, and other clothes that her father used to wear. She persuaded Judge Dascombe to don the garments. She combed his hair as her father's used to be combed. Then the artist went to work and did his job so well that few people who saw the portrait of Benjamin Brown, even in days when Brown himself was well remembered, ever had the slightest idea that they were really looking upon the features of another man.

Interesting stories can be told about the old taverns, but none more interesting than those which cluster about the Jed Prouty Tavern at Bucksport. It is probably one of very few American hotels that got its name, not from a proprietor, but from a humble employee. In 1889, the clerk at this tavern, which had gone by various names since its building in 1798, was a Bangor boy named Richard Golden. During time off from his hotel duties, Golden wrote a play called *Jed Prouty*, and with an amateur cast produced it in Bucksport that winter. Picked up by a New York producer, the play became a hit on Broadway, and was produced at one-night stands all over the country. Young Golden himself went to New York and made good in the theatre, founding the renowned Golden theatrical family. In proud recognition of his famous clerk, the owner of the Bucksport Hotel named it the Jed Prouty Tavern, and so it has remained to this day.

The original building on the Jed Prouty site was built in 1798 of hand-hewn timbers fastened with wooden pegs and hand-wrought nails. That original structure is now the east wing of the present house, and the beautifully designed fanlights over its entrances are still intact. Its distinguished main staircase and hand-carved cornices in the upper hall have appeared in several

books on New England architecture. The old H and HL hinges are still on the guest room doors, and the doors themselves are of the kind called Christian doors because of the design of the cross upon them. No room in the house has ever had a lock; all doors are fastened by inside bolts.

Down in Bucksport, they like to tell you that five presidents of the United States stopped at the Jed Prouty Tavern. That boast must make some of the G. A. R. veterans turn over in their graves, for to reach that number five the boaster must include Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States of America. Of course Davis did not stop there while he was Confederate president, but earlier, when he was a United States Senator.

Four genuine United States presidents did honor the Jed Prouty Tavern with their presence. William Henry Harrison, the man whose campaign was run on the slogan "Tippecanoe and Tyler too," stopped there just a month before his inauguration in 1841. Less than a year earlier, his predecessor, Martin Van Buren, had been a Bucksport guest. When Harrison died, after only a few weeks in office, his successor John Tyler signed the Prouty register. But none of those three was the first president to stop at this tavern. That honor went to Andrew Jackson, who made a presidential visit here in 1835.

The Jed Prouty's most famous guest, however, was not a president, but a man who was a maker and breaker of presidents, Daniel Webster. He was a guest at Prouty's a dozen times between 1835 and 1842. In fact Webster and the four presidents all registered at the Bucksport tavern for the same reason, the long dispute between the United States and Britain over the boundary line between Maine and Canada. It was that dispute which precipitated the bloodless Aroostook War, and which was finally settled by the Webster-Ashburton Treaty. In 1840 Bucksport was called by its old name, Buckstown. It was a prominent stage coach center. The so called Airline road from Bangor to Calais had not then been opened, and Buckstown was a regular stage stop on the road to Passamaquoddy Bay. It was thus a stop on the road to the disputed boundary area. At this old tavern was held many a conference between Webster and his advisors, some of whom were four of the nation's successive presidents.

Appetites were hearty in the old days, and the plentifulness and cheapness of food allowed the hotels to provide lavish meals at low cost. Many Maine men of my age remember well the wonderful dinners we used to get on the top-floor dining room of Portland's Congress Square Hotel for one dollar. If you so preferred, you didn't even have to make choices from the menu. Just sign your name at the bottom, and the waitress would bring you a portion of every item on it, all for one dollar.

When a hotel served a special banquet, the menu was something to behold. On December 20, 1853, the Lancaster House in Portland served a dinner to celebrate the arrival of the first European steamer ever to land at Portland. After a big serving of vermicelli oyster soup, the diners partook of seven kinds of roast meats, eight of boiled meats, nine of cold and ornamental dishes; side dishes of curry of chicken, breaded eels, fried oysters, broiled trout, and oyster patties; a number of items called relishes and extraordinaries, nine kinds of vegetables, ten items under the heading of ornamental confectionery, eight desserts, and a top-off of what were called confects, among a dozen of which were ice cream and cake.

In 1888, the citizens of Oakland tendered a banquet to the old Civil War regiments, the Third Maine Infantry and the Fifth Maine Battery. A now yellowed copy of that banquet menu reveals that the items were given Civil War names. Bull Run mock turtle soup was followed by Appomatox roast pig, Williamsburg chicken, Fair Oaks cold lamb, Seven Pines mutton, Savage Station turkey, Cedar Creek trout, and Fisher's Hill sardines. The "Relishes and Skirmishes" included Fredericksburg cole slaw and Second Bull Run salad. The bread was Wilderness hoe cake. The desserts included Malvern Hill watermelon and Cold Harbor ice cream. The whole meal could be washed down with Petersburg hot coffee or Gettysburg gunpowder tea.

Sixty years ago, in 1893, the Elmwood Hotel in Waterville served a full-course Thanksgiving dinner for one dollar. It began with blue points on the half shell, followed by consomme royal or cream of chicken soup. Then came a serving of Columbia River salmon with hollandaise potatoes, after which boiled Philadelphia capon or boiled fancy brisket was offered. After those preliminaries came the main dish. You had five choices, but were not limited to one of them. If you wanted all five, just say so.

There were roast native turkey with English dressing and cranberry sauce, roast ribs of prime beef with Yorkshire pudding, roast young pig pork with spiced apple sauce, roast saddle of mutton with red currant jelly, and baked Virginia ham with raisin sauce. Accompanying vegetables were white and sweet potatoes, squash, onions, boiled rice, and little gem peas. To help get the entree down, your glass was kept filled with cardinal punch. Then you were expected to dispose of larded fillet of beef, curry of chicken wings with oysters, Parmesan baked spaghetti, and golden drops with orange sauce. Next came a dish of shrimp salad with mayonnaise, after which you still were supposed to tackle helpings of teal duck with apple jelly and haunch of venison with game sauce.

How anyone could have room for dessert after those servings is unexplained, but plenty of dessert there was. Apple, mince, custard, pumpkin, and whipped cream pies competed for your attention with English fruit pudding with hard sauce, vanilla ice cream, angel cake, walnut cake, strawberry sponge, apples, oranges, Malaga grapes, figs, nuts and coffee. "You pays your dollar and you takes it all."

High speed transportation has banished the old taverns. The traveler, commercial and tourist alike, now whizzes through or around the little villages where once the stage coach drew up with blast of horn and where many a passenger sought bed and breakfast. Along with the stage coach itself, the village tavern is now a fast fading memory, but for more than a century it was a part of the social tradition in our valley of the Kennebec.

Chapter XVIII

THE DOCTOR'S MURDER

“**H**URRY up, Doc,” shouted Joseph Hasty as Dr. Coolidge drove into the stable yard of the Williams House. “Hurry up, Doctor Thayer’s waiting for you.”

“Dr. Thayer waiting for me?” asked Coolidge. “What can he want?”

“You mean you ain’t heard, Doc?” queried Hasty. “Ed Mathews’ dead.”

“Ed dead?” exclaimed the doctor. “Why, I saw him only yesterday and he was sound as a nut.”

“That may be,” said Hasty, “but right now he’s in Williams’ hall, dead as a door-nail.”

That Friday morning, October 1, 1847, was indeed an exciting time in Waterville. Soon after daylight word was circulating rapidly through the town that a body had been found somewhere down on Main Street. To this day, more than a hundred years after the event, no one has been able to discover who found the body. A dozen men testified at inquest and trial that they saw it early on that Friday morning, but each insisted that others were there before him.

Anyhow, before the stores were open and before there was activity on the streets, someone had found the body of a young man in the cellar of a three story building at No. 27 Main Street, on a part of the site now occupied by the Federal Trust Company. Next door stood the Williams House. The building was occupied on the first floor by Shorey’s Clothing Establishment and the shop of Charles Phillip; on the second floor by offices, one suite of which was occupied by Dr. Valorus P. Coolidge; and the third floor by Shorey’s garment workers and a small print shop. The body was on a pile of wood near the foot of the cellar stairs, placed in a sitting position and fully clothed.

At the trial Joseph Hasty testified that while he was not the first to see the body, he did remove it from the cellar, out of the rollway door that opened into the Williams' stable yard. He laid the body on a plank in the yard, and for the first time discovered the victim's identity. Hasty said there were a dozen men around by that time, and all agreed that the young man was Edward Mathews, member of a prominent Waterville family.

The Mathews family had been prominent since Col. Jabez Mathews, with his sons John and Simeon, had come to Waterville in 1794. It was not his first appearance in the town. He had been there in 1775, when he was a member of Col. Ward's division of Benedict Arnold's expedition to Quebec. On the north side of Silver Street, near Main, imposingly stood Waterville's first two-story house. There Mathews took up his residence and kept a tavern.

Jabez' second son, Simeon, became one of Waterville's wealthiest early citizens. He formed a partnership with an even wealthier man, Nathaniel Gilman, and together they operated an extensive trade. In one year they shipped out on the river boats 6000 bushels of wheat and 20,000 bushels of oats. Simeon built the large mansion on lower Silver Street later known as the Terry estate. More than any other person, he was responsible for Waterville's distinction as the Elm City, because he planted a row of elms on each side of Silver Street from the Universalist Church to the head of Gold Street.

The two eldest children of Simeon Mathews were William, born in 1818, and Edward, born in 1822. William was to live to a ripe old age, and in his 85th year would be writing one of the most interesting chapters in the Centennial History of Waterville, a chapter called "Recollections of Waterville in the Olden Time." A graduate of Waterville College in 1835, he was school teacher, lawyer, classical scholar, editor, publisher, and noted author. Among his dozen or more books of essays, the best known was "Getting on in the World" which sold 75,000 copies in the United States, went through a large Canadian edition, was brought out by three different publishers in England, went into three Scandinavian editions, and was also translated into German and Magyar.

When William Mathews bought a small press and started a Waterville newspaper, *The Yankee Blade*, in 1842, he took his

twenty-year old brother Edward into partnership. In a building on the southwest corner of Main and Silver Streets, W. and E. Mathews published the *Blade*, did job printing, and operated a book and stationery store. The paper lasted only a year, when William Mathews sold his interest in it to out-of-town parties, who took it elsewhere for publication. At the same time Edward took over the book and stationery business.

An enterprising young man with the backing of a wealthy father, Edward Mathews seemed destined to go far. Unlike William, he had not gone to college, but had shown a good head for business. He looked upon William as the family scholar, himself as the trader. Soon after the starting of the *Yankee Blade*, father Simeon had died, and Edward regarded it as his special duty to care for his widowed mother.

Edward turned his interest to the buying and selling of meat cattle. The time was the hey-day of the great droves of cattle, driven overland from all parts of Maine to the Brighton Market, just outside of Boston. Some of those droves were immense, numbering more than five hundred animals. Handled shrewdly, the business was amazingly profitable. In partnership with another man, Edward had also opened a store in Clinton.

Before young Mathews met his death he had gone, on Thursday morning, to the Ticonic Bank and had applied to its cashier, Augustus Perkins, for a loan of \$1500. That was not unusual, for this twenty-five year old youth often borrowed money to buy cattle, and repaid it when he sold the cattle at Brighton. Perkins had filled out a blank note, which Mathews took out with him to get endorsers. About three o'clock that afternoon, he returned to the bank, presenting the note now endorsed by his uncle John and his cousin Charles, to whom he had recently sold the book store. Discounting the note for sixty days, the cashier handed Mathews \$1484.25 in cash.

What had happened to that money? It was not found on the body nor at his home. Neither Uncle John nor Cousin Charles had seen it. Furthermore the young man's gold watch was missing. Had he met a violent death? The doctors must determine the answer.

When Dr. Coolidge entered the room in the Williams House where the body of Edward Mathews had been laid, Doctors Thayer and Plaisted were already there. The former was Dr.

Sidney Thayer, grandfather of the even more famous Dr. Frederick Thayer. Dr. Plaisted, who was to become Waterville's best known physician, had married the daughter of Waterville's early doctor, Moses Appleton. Both Thayer and Plaisted were middle-aged and of high professional reputation, yet they respected the skill and personality of the young man who now entered the room.

Valorus P. Coolidge had been born in the town of Canton, where in 1847 his father and other members of the family still lived. When he reached the age of 21, in 1841, young Coolidge had left Canton to study medicine with an uncle in Buckfield. With the Uncle's assistance he studied for a time at the Hanover Medical College, now the Dartmouth Medical School, but did not take a degree. In 1843 he came to Waterville, to complete his medical studies with Dr. Joseph Potter. In 1845 he took over Potter's practice and became immediately popular and respected.

Superficial examination of Mathews' body revealed to the three doctors deep cuts on the forehead and top of the head, but no fracture of the skull. The head cut was, however, deep and long. Someone—later questioning could not determine who—suggested that they make some internal inspection then and there, and begin by removing the stomach. All those present afterwards agreed that the actual operation was performed by Dr. Coolidge with the assistance of his medical student, Thomas Flint. At the trial, Dr. Plaisted testified that the knives were probably first offered to the older physicians, but in such cases it was common for the younger doctors to perform the operation.

Now comes one of the mysteries of the case. All witnesses agreed that the contents of the stomach were placed in an ordinary white washbowl by Dr. Coolidge and handed over to Cyrus Williams, the hotel proprietor. Neither Williams nor anyone else could testify that Coolidge told the hotel man to dispose of the contents. On the witness stand Williams said that Dr. Coolidge asked Dr. Thayer and the coroner if they had finished with the stomach. Getting their assent, Coolidge told Williams to carry the bowl out. Somehow sensing that he had better not throw the contents away, Williams placed the bowl behind an old hogshead at the foot of the tavern's back stairs.

Unbelievable as it seems, in light of modern investigations, that bowl lay there unguarded and unnoticed all of that Friday

night. On Saturday morning, Williams went to the place before daylight and took the bowl to his empty ice-house, where he locked it up. About ten o'clock that morning, by instruction of Dr. Thayer, Williams handed over the bowl and its contents to Professor Loomis of Waterville College who had agreed to make a chemical examination.

In that carelessly preserved substance, Professor Loomis found traces of prussic acid, in spite of the volatile nature of that chemical. At a more thorough post-mortem on Sunday, in which five physicians, including Coolidge, participated, examination of brain, kidneys, liver and other organs confirmed Loomis' conviction that death had been caused by prussic acid taken in brandy.

Those blows on the head troubled the coroner's jury, and it was on October 6, a full week after the death of Mathews before they issued their verdict. They found that Mathews had come to his death "by poison, or by blows on the head, or by both, administered by a person or persons unknown." They further declared that the poison was prussic acid, taken in brandy. It was later confirmed that the blows had been inflicted after death.

The day after the jury's verdict, the *Waterville Mail*, the town's weekly newspaper, made it plain that suspicion had already been aroused. Naturally the town was greatly excited. It was Waterville's first murder since the town's incorporation in 1802, and was destined to be its only one for 115 years. The *Mail* said:

Early on last Friday morning, the dead body of Mr. Edward Mathews was found in the basement of Mr. Shorey's clothing store on Main Street, under circumstances indicating beyond question that he had been murdered and robbed. There were several severe cuts on the head, some marks of violence on the throat, and a cut across the thigh, apparently made in opening the pants pocket. It was ascertained that the victim had on his person, at nine o'clock on the previous evening, more than \$1500 and a gold watch, for which no doubt the murder was committed. We forbear, for the present, to repeat any of a thousand surmises which are afloat. Strange facts are said to have been disclosed to the coroner's jury, but no arrest has yet been made. We can only say that suspicion is very decided in one direction.

It was at once apparent that the murder had not been committed where the body was found. Nor had it been committed in the street or elsewhere out of doors, for there was no mud or

dirt on clothes or boots. There was no indication that the body had been dragged on the ground, or that any scuffle had occurred. In order to remove the body through the rollway door, a great deal of the woodpile had to be moved aside, and there was no evidence that the wood had been recently moved. The door could not have been opened from the outside wide enough to admit a person or persons carrying a body, and to avoid getting mud on clothes or boots it would have to be carried. There was just one way the body could get into that cellar in the condition in which it was found. It must have been brought down the cellar stairs.

Such indeed was the reasoning of the county authorities and those of the state who were called in. On October 7—the very day when the *Mail* published its non-committal story—the grand jury at Augusta brought in an indictment of murder against Dr. Valorus Coolidge, and on the next morning he was arrested by officers Norris, Nudd, and Miller, acting for County Sheriff L. D. Moor. The town was now truly stirred. The Coolidge partisans were many, and they could not believe that the charming doctor had anything to do with the crime. Others were just as quick to denounce him, while a third group refused to take sides until facts were produced at the trial.

Coolidge was brought before Justice Tenney of the Maine Supreme Court at Augusta on October 24, 1847, and pleaded not guilty. The judge set trial for the January term of court, and Coolidge was meanwhile remanded to the county jail at Augusta. When the trial opened on January 25, Cyrus Williams, an important witness, was too ill to appear. The judge therefore declared a postponement until the second Tuesday in March.

The best modern authority on the Coolidge case is Col. Harvey Doane Eaton, Jr., a retired army engineer now living at Cornville, Maine. To him the present writer is deeply indebted for facts and documentary information on this century-old case. Colonel Eaton has investigated the records, procured photostats, looked into the background of many persons concerned, and has done exhaustive research on obscure factors connected with the strange series of events that surrounded this Waterville murder. Colonel Eaton agrees with me that the mystery will never be fully solved. As for the factors which constituted the mystery, we shall note them as this chapter progresses. We have already

encountered one: why did not Coolidge destroy the contents of the stomach when he could have done it so easily?

The trial opened on March 14, 1848. As told in the *Northern Tribune* of Bath,

At a quarter past 10 the Court assembled at the Congregational Meeting-house, which had been previously prepared for the trial, the Court House being much too small to accommodate those who wished to attend. Suitable platforms had been erected for the use of Court, counsel and witnesses. When the doors were opened there was a tremendous rush of spectators, and the large house was speedily filled. The galleries were mostly occupied by ladies, of whom a large number were in attendance.

Several papers commented on the unseemly conduct of the usually sedate Augusta matrons, who had gathered outside the door before daylight, and according to one account did not hesitate to use hatpins on the men who got in their way. It was, however, left for Asa Burnham to give those women at the trial the final sting. Asa was a minor witness, but that his eyes and ears took in a lot more than what transpired on the witness stand, is shown by a paragraph in the memoirs which he wrote many years afterward. He wrote: "The ladies in the galleries sent down bouquets on the criminal's head, for Coolidge was handsome to behold, attracting their attention and admiration. With many of those ladies, if such they can be called, Coolidge had been particularly if not criminally intimate."

Burnham admitted that Coolidge was good-looking. The Bath reporter was equally complimentary. "The prisoner was brought in and placed in a box in the main aisle, near the witness stand. He looked pale, but calm and collected; youthful in appearance, but with countenance denoting energy and decision of character. He is a strikingly handsome man."

As was customary in the trial of capital offenses in Maine at that time, the court consisted not of a single judge, but of three judges of the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Whitman and his two associates, Judges Shepley and Wells. The prosecution was headed by the Attorney General, Samuel Blake of Bangor, who was assisted by a young attorney, Lot M. Morrill of Augusta. That young lawyer was destined to fame, for he later became Governor of Maine, United States Senator, and Secretary of the Treasury. Even in 1847 he was to shine at this trial by his masterly introduction of the case and his brilliant examina-

tion of witnesses. It was left for the Attorney General, however, to lay the final arguments before the jury.

As so often happens in a murder trial, it proved difficult to secure a satisfactory jury. The defense attorneys, George Evans of Gardiner and Edwin Noyes of Waterville, used up all their peremptory challenges and fought hard, often successfully, to keep certain veniremen off the panel. Confronting Theodore Allen, Mr. Noyes asked him if he had read or conversed about the case, and whether what he had read and heard had made any impression upon his mind. The Chief Justice expressed doubt as to the propriety of certain of Noyes' questions. Noyes insisted that unless a juror enters a case indifferent and unbiased, he cannot serve, and cited court decisions to support his point. The Court ruled out the questions on the ground that the defense must show directly, not hypothetically, the impartiality of a juror. Mr. Noyes then had to use a peremptory challenge, but he kept the man off the jury. Six prospective jurors were excused because they objected to capital punishment. One man requested excuse because of sickness in his family, but he was accepted and sworn in just the same. So many others admitted that they had already formed an opinion which it would be hard to change, that 39 men were examined before an acceptable jury was secured. The twelve good men and true, peers of the accused in our American democracy, who were to decide the fate of Dr. Valorus Coolidge, were Francis Haines of East Livermore, foreman; Joseph Allen of Monmouth, Hiram Averill of Pittston, Brown Baker of Gardiner, Jonathan Clark of China, Daniel Cunningham of Windsor, Ozem Dowst of Vienna, David Elliot of Readfield, Isaac Farr of Gardiner, Harrison Gould of Leeds, William Greene of Pittston, and Harrison Ham of Wales.

Thanks to Colonel Eaton we have seen a photostatic copy of the grand jury's indictment of Coolidge. In the handwriting of the clerk who made those court records a hundred years ago, the aged document shows that the grand jury left little to chance. They brought four counts against the doctor: first, that he had killed Mathews by a blow on the head; second, that he mixed prussic acid with brandy and gave the mixture to Mathews, who drank it; third, that he killed Mathews with a mixture of hydrocyanic acid and brandy; and fourth, that he mixed prussic acid with brandy, which Mathews was about to drink and did drink.

Since hydrocyanic acid and prussic acid are two names for the same thing, the second and third counts were almost identical. The fourth was so phrased that Coolidge could be convicted even if it could not be proved that he had given the drink to Mathews, but only that he had mixed it before Mathews drank it.

It was reported that the state had more than a hundred witnesses ready to testify. That may have been true, for sixty were actually called to the stand. Most of them only corroborated the testimony of others, but some of them gave vital evidence. Professor Loomis explained in detail how he was sure the stomach of the murdered man contained prussic acid, and cross examination failed to shake him. David Shorey, the clothier, telling about the morning when the body was found, was emphatic about wood having to be removed before the rollway door could be opened. He also testified that, because Dr. Coolidge kept his fuel and certain jars of medicine in the cellar, he had free access to it by doors that were never locked.

The trial had scarcely entered its third day when it became apparent that Dr. Coolidge owed money to many Waterville citizens, every one of whom thought he was the only person from whom the doctor had borrowed. Again and again the doctor had demanded secrecy about the transactions. He owed William Tobey \$115, and had once offered Tobey ten per cent interest for a loan of \$500, but did not get it. He got \$200 from David Smiley, \$200 from Isaac Britton, and \$125 from Daniel Moor, for a hundred of which he had agreed to pay 12 per cent in return for Moor's pledge of secrecy. He owed \$100 to Warren Doe, \$150 to John Philbrick, \$180 to James Goodwin, \$350 to John Richards, and \$100 to Robert Drummond. On September 30, 1847, the day of the murder, two of Coolidge's notes were overdue at the Ticonic Bank.

Especially damaging to Coolidge was the testimony of George Gilman. He said he was standing in front of the Williams House a few days before the murder when Dr. Coolidge came along and told him he was trying to raise \$2000, that he had a chance for sound speculation with Dr. Potter in Ohio lands. Gilman said Coolidge insisted he had already made three or four hundred dollars in such speculation through Dr. Potter. According to Gilman's further testimony, Coolidge had offered him \$500 if he would loan \$2000 for three months. Gilman had then

walked away, but Coolidge followed and begged him not to miss so good a chance to make \$500. Later Gilman met Coolidge again, in front of a Main Street store, and the latter said: "I shall want that money within a month."

On the Saturday morning after the murder, Gilman testified, he was in the bar-room of the Williams House when Coolidge called him into the front entry out of sight and hearing of others in the bar-room. There Coolidge told him, "I did not ask you for money last week. I only told you that money could be made in speculations out west. That is the way you must tell it." When Gilman told Coolidge he would tell the incident exactly as it happened, Gilman testified that Coolidge exclaimed, "My God, I am a ruined man."

Charles Mathews, the cousin who with his father John had endorsed the \$1500 note on that fatal morning of September 30, testified about a mysterious letter. He said that when Edward came to the bookstore to get him to endorse the note, Edward showed him a letter from Dr. Coolidge. At least it had Dr. Coolidge's name signed to it, and he was sure it was in Coolidge's handwriting, with which Charles Mathews was familiar. Edward did not let Charles read the letter, but read it aloud to him. Over the protests of the defense, the Court allowed Charles to state the contents of the letter, though the document itself was not to be found. The letter, said Charles, requested Edward to come to the doctor's office that evening and "reveal it not for your life." Those words, insisted Charles, were underscored with a heavy line.

The inference of all this was that Edward Mathews was negotiating the \$1500 loan in order to turn around and make a more productive loan to Coolidge, who had held out to Mathews the lure of high interest or premium, such as that to which Gilman had testified. However, though their testimony kept them a long time on the stand, neither Charles nor John Mathews were able to state why Edward wanted to borrow money at the bank.

Several witnesses testified to seeing Edward on the street on that tragic Thursday evening. He was seen in the vicinity of the Coolidge office, but no one actually saw him enter there. Charles Mathews was emphatic and unshaken, however, in his statement that about eight o'clock that evening Edward left Charles, saying it was time for him to go to Dr. Coolidge's of-

fice. Several persons testified to seeing Coolidge and Mathews in close conversation just outside the former's office, late that Thursday afternoon.

Benjamin Ayer was even more definite. He had been to the doctor's office about three o'clock. Two young medical students of Coolidge's were there, and Ayer chatted with them. After about ten minutes Coolidge entered from the back office, followed by Edward Mathews. The doctor picked up his medicine case and went down the stairs toward the street. Suddenly he stopped, turned around and asked Mathews to come down. Half-way down the stairs they talked in low tones for scarcely more than a minute. Ayer could distinguish none of the conversation except the doctor's parting words, which he was sure were "Keep it dark."

Ebenezer Shaw, the coroner who had conducted the inquest, introduced the subject of Mathews' missing watch. He said, while he was examining Mathews' body, a man named Howe told him he had just found some money in the woodshed of the Williams House. Calling some of his coroner's jury to accompany him, Shaw had gone to the place pointed out by Howe and had found \$155 concealed in the wood. He had just returned to where the body lay when someone placed in his hands a watch and chain. He identified a watch exhibited by the prosecution as the watch placed in his hands on that morning of October first.

Then the prosecutor put on the stand Emulous Butterfield, the man who had found the watch. He testified that, four days after the murder, he found the watch in Dr. Coolidge's sleigh, stored over the carriage house attached to the Williams stable. Butterfield said he had climbed up on a carriage to get into the loft. He found the watch between the seat and swell of the sleigh. The vehicle was only a sleigh top, without runners. The sleigh body being then exhibited in court, Butterfield pointed out where he had found the watch.

It took only a few minutes for the prosecution to identify the sleigh as Coolidge's and the watch as the property of Ed Mathews. Up to this point in the trial, the jury had been given evidence that Coolidge was hard up for money, that not only did he say he wanted loans for speculation in Ohio, but that actually he could not meet two notes overdue at the bank; that he owed amounts of \$100 or more to nearly a dozen different individuals,

some of whom were pressing him for payment. The jurors had also been shown the probability of Mathews' being in Coolidge's office after eight o'clock on the fatal evening, the ease with which Coolidge had access to the place where the body was found and the high probability that the body had not been brought to the cellar from outside the building. But all this was circumstantial evidence. It showed motive and opportunity, but nothing more. Coolidge had made two long statements to the coroner's jury, in both of which he emphatically denied all knowledge of the crime.

It was Valorus Coolidge's closest friend and associate who sealed his fate. The doctor's favorite medical student, Thomas Flint, son of State Senator Flint of Anson, decided to tell what he knew. Long troubled in conscience, he had called his father to Waterville and, seeking the paternal advice, told him a sordid story of that September night. Senator Flint prevailed upon his son to tell the story to the Attorney General, and it was that sensational story with which young Flint now electrified the crowded spectators in the Augusta meetinghouse.

Flint said he had been in Waterville for the past two years, studying medicine under Dr. Coolidge. About seven o'clock on the evening of September 30, Flint said he returned to Waterville from a visit to Clinton, took tea at the Williams House and then went to the Coolidge office. The doctor, after chatting a while with Flint, told him he had an appointment to meet Charles Stackpole there and would like to see him privately. Flint said he took the hint and went to the Williams House, where he found a woman in the parlor, holding a child with an abnormally large head. He talked with the mother, went out to Percival's store for a piece of string, then measured the child's head. Then he played a few games of backgammon with Emily Williams, the proprietor's daughter.

About 9:30 Flint picked up a lamp, lighted it, and started up the stairs for bed. As he opened the parlor door into the hall, Coolidge stepped forward, blew out the lamp and said, "Come to my office at once." When they reached the office, the doctor, in trepidation and excitement, locked the outside door and said: "Tom, I am going to reveal to you a secret that involves my life."

"That cursed little Ed Mathews," cried Coolidge. "He came in here, drank some brandy, and fell down dead. He now lies in

the other room. I have thumped him on the head to make folks think he was murdered. What shall I do with him now?"

Flint clumsily replied that he did not know. Coolidge said he wished Mathews were in the river and they must somehow put him there. Flint objected that it was too light and the river-bank too far away. He suggested the best they could do was to put the body in the cellar, and insisted that was as far as he would help Coolidge. He would have no part in taking the body out of the building. Finally Coolidge agreed and, taking the lamp, went down into Shorey's shop to open the cellar door. Removing their boots, so as to make no noise, the pair picked up the body, carried it down the stairs, through Shorey's shop, then down the cellar stairs and deposited it on the wood pile.

After they returned to the office, the doctor again took the lamp, went down and closed the cellar door and made sure that they had disturbed nothing in the shop. Then, in considerable agitation, he asked Flint what he should do next. Flint advised that the doctor go about his business as usual. Coolidge said, "People cannot suspect me; my popularity will shield me." He then told Flint that he must go to Skowhegan early in the morning before daylight, that he wanted Flint to be sure to come to the office before breakfast and see how things then looked.

Flint did as he was told, and was disturbed the next morning by spots he found on the carpet. He went back to the Williams House for breakfast and was back at the office ordering the office boy to clean the place up "good" when news came that the body had been found. He was soon called to the office of Squire Boutelle and questioned about the crime. Believing his statements that he knew nothing about it, the authorities let him go.

When Flint returned to the office he found Coolidge putting down a charge of \$200 against Ed Mathews in his account book. The doctor then picked up the book and said he was going to the Williams House. But before leaving the office, he took out his pocketbook and handed Flint some money, saying, "They may want to see my pocketbook, and I fear there is too much money in it to satisfy them."

Flint then told how he had helped Coolidge perform the post-mortem operation. After his return from Skowhegan, Coolidge had given Flint a letter, telling him to destroy it. Flint said he tore it up in small pieces on the street. That may have

been the missing letter which Charles Mathews insisted Coolidge had written to Edward. Flint testified that he placed in the wood pile the money Coolidge had given him. It was that money which Howe had found and turned over to the coroner.

Then came Flint's second damaging revelation. Coolidge told him, after they returned from the post-mortem examination, that a thousand dollars was under the carpet beneath the iron safe in the office. He asked Flint to take care of it. Flint did nothing about it until the next morning, when he went to the office, removed the money from beneath the carpet, and put it in a jug, which he placed in one of the small closets under the medicine shelves. There, for the next twelve hours, with both men jittery about it, the money lay.

On Saturday evening Flint went to the office, broke the jug, and threw the money into the stove. When he heard that Mathews' watch was missing, Flint asked Coolidge about it. The latter said the watch was in his sleigh in Williams's carriage loft, that it was too dangerous for him to remove it now, because his every move was watched.

Cross-examination failed to shake Flint's testimony, though there was only his word that he had burned the money. When the case went to the jury after eight days of trial, it was largely a question of how much credence they put in Flint's story. The defense made a feeble showing. Their one hope was to discredit Flint, and they made a mess of that. Their half dozen character witnesses for Coolidge did little good.

In his final summing up, the Attorney General made the most of Flint's testimony. He said:

Can the jury possibly decide that Flint's conduct on that evening destroys the creditability of his story? Look at the relation of the two parties. The prisoner was a man of high standing and large practice. Flint had then no suspicion of murder; he believed his teacher's story. Place yourself at his age and in his relation to the prisoner, and what would you have done? As mature men of principle, you would have rushed to the door and proclaimed the fact that a man had died there. But as a young man who looked upon the doctor as a benefactor, you might have done just as he did. Flint had no reason to implicate the prisoner by making up this story. He could make up a better story than that. He could say that the prisoner confessed the murder to him. But Flint does not say that. He has simply revealed the truth, not to implicate the prisoner, but because, on reflection and under the advice of his father, he deemed it his duty to God, his country and his conscience to tell the truth.

At 5:30 P. M. on the eighth day of the trial the jury finally heard the judge's charge and retired to consider their verdict. At nine o'clock the next morning they were still out. At 11:30 the Court directed that they be brought in. The foreman stated he saw no prospect of the jury agreeing. In answer to the judge's questions, he added that no point of law required clearing up; it was entirely a matter of interpretation of the evidence. The weight of testimony seemed insufficient to get those twelve men to agree. The Court directed that they keep trying, at least until three o'clock.

At the appointed time the foreman said the jury had not yet agreed, but might be able to do so in half an hour. At four o'clock they filed into court. They had agreed, and each in turn expressed his assent to the verdict. On the first count, not guilty. Mathews had obviously not been killed by blows inflicted after he was dead. On the other three counts, guilty of murder in the first degree.

The Chief Justice asked Coolidge if he had anything to say. The doctor replied that he was an innocent man, that there is another and higher court before which he must stand and where false testimony will not prevail. He said it would do no good for him to state what he knew, but that when he departed he might leave it in writing. He bade both friends and enemies an affectionate farewell, and said he was ready to receive sentence.

While the Maine law then demanded capital punishment for murder, it also guarded against executing an innocent man by requiring that the execution be delayed until one year after pronouncement of sentence. That accounts for the words of Chief Justice Whitman, when he said to Dr. Coolidge on March 24, 1848:

Valorus P. Coolidge: a jury, after an impartial investigation, have pronounced against you a verdict of guilty of the crime of murder, and the court deems your guilt legally established. But our statute is conceived in mercy. You are not to be hurried at once from time into eternity. You cannot be executed short of a year from this time, and that space, it may be hoped, will be devoted to your contemplation of your forlorn condition. And may contrition and repentance then make you a fit subject for the mercy of an offended God. Valorus P. Coolidge: we sentence you to be hanged by the neck until you be dead, and for this purpose order that you be conveyed to the State Prison at Thomaston, in the County of Lincoln, and until this sentence of death shall be inflicted upon you, that you there be put to hard labor in solitary confinement.

It is an interesting fact that the trial of Dr. Coolidge was not held in what lawyers call a court of record. There is no official transcript of the testimony. All that remains of the court papers is the indictment, the statement of hearing before Judge Tenney, the assignment to January 25, its postponement to March 14, the list of the jurors, and their verdict. For all the testimony we are dependent upon the newspaper accounts.

We had been told that the Coolidge case was appealed, but that no record existed of court action. Imagine our delight, therefore, when we found, attached to the indictment, in the handwriting of the same court scribe, this statement:

And now, after verdict and before sentence is passed, the said Coolidge, against whom a verdict of guilty of murder in the first degree has been rendered, comes and moves the Court that the verdict may be set aside, and a new trial be granted him, for the following reasons: that papers important for his defense were taken from his possession by order of the prosecuting officer and have been withheld from him and his counsel; that among those papers was a letter from one Doctor Potter of Cincinnati in Ohio, the substance of which is stated in an affidavit of Samuel Norris; that among them also were letters from Dr. Potter upon the subject of land speculations; that these letters are withheld from the inspection of the prisoner and his counsel; that upon a new trial the said Coolidge will be able to produce certain letters and to prove that they were written to him by Dr. Potter, and that the remedy spoken of in one said letter was prussic acid.

So much for the official language. Exactly what had happened? The trial had been long and tedious. Tempers were frayed when that plea for a new trial reached the court. Mr. Evans, one of Coolidge's attorneys, told the judge he wished to inquire of the Attorney General concerning the missing letters. The judge granted the request, and Mr. Evans said that, after the jury went out, he had learned that among the doctor's private papers was a letter, in which the writer, Dr. Potter, speaks of the use of prussic acid for cataract of the eye, that the strongest kind must be used, and advising Dr. Coolidge to try experiments. The Attorney General replied that he did have in his possession one or two letters to Coolidge, but he did not believe they contained any mention of prussic acid.

Mr. Evans said he was not satisfied with the Attorney General's reply, and he would prove to the court that such a letter certainly existed. The Attorney General angrily retorted that since Evans questioned his word and even imputed to him the

crime of concealing evidence, he would withdraw his previous courteous offer to allow Mr. Evans to inspect any and all letters taken from Coolidge. Mr. Evans then produced an affidavit signed by James B. Norris, one of the arresting officers, that when he took Coolidge into custody, Norris had taken from the doctor's person three letters, one of which was from Dr. Potter and mentioned a new remedy for some disease of the eye, and advised Coolidge to try the remedy on the eye of a dog. Mr. Evans said Dr. Hill had seen the letter, but was now absent from town.

The Court decided to postpone sentence until the next morning, in order to give Evans time to get a statement from Dr. Hill. When morning came the case for appeal collapsed. Evans sheepishly announced that the recollection of Dr. Hill did not support the information Evans had given the previous afternoon. The Attorney General added that the letters from Dr. Potter contained nothing helpful to the prisoner, but did contain reflections on some of the respectable citizens of Waterville, and the introduction of those letters in court could only harm innocent persons. Right there the case for appeal was dropped.

The case appears simple, as one reads those careful newspaper accounts a hundred years after the event. There seems little doubt of the doctor's guilt. Why then did the jury take 23 hours to reach a verdict? There was something about that trial not made clear in the newspaper stories—something that put doubt into the minds of the jurors, so that three times the foreman reported they could not reach a verdict. Was it the appealing looks and the polite manner of the handsome and popular prisoner? Were there attempts to tamper with the jury in Coolidge's favor?

After the verdict, but before sentence was passed, the Attorney General told the Court that he had just had placed in his hands a note found near the jury room, under such circumstances as to make it probable that it contained a highly improper matter. He stated that it was addressed to the foreman of the jury, to whom it was passed with directions to return it if it were not on private business. After opening the letter, the foreman said it was not on private business, but was addressed inside "To the Gentlemen of the Jury," and was anonymous.

The foreman did not read the letter, but returned it to the court. The judge then delivered it to the Attorney General, with directions not to let it pass out of his hands, but to take such measures regarding it as law and justice demanded. The Chief Justice refused to declare a mistrial because he was convinced that the jury did not see the contents of the letter.

As for what those contents were, and how the letter reached the jury room, we have only the statement of a newspaper reporter: "The letter is in a lady's handwriting and contains an appeal to the sympathies of the jury in behalf of the prisoner."

Thus the trial came to a close, and on March 26, 1848, the sheriff of Kennebec County delivered into the hands of the warden of the State Prison at Thomaston, the person of Valorus P. Coolidge, to await his execution.

Chapter XIX

VANISH THE DOCTOR

THE previous chapter has been given the title "The Doctor's Murder" by special license of the possessive case, meaning not an objective but a subjective genitive, not murder of the doctor, but murder by the doctor. We have taken that license because the principal figure in this story is not the poor victim, but rather the convicted murderer. Even up to the time he entered the prison at Thomaston this was very much the Doctor's murder. From that time on it became even more so, as mystery after mystery piled up an amazing sequel.

Coolidge wrote many letters from his Thomaston cell, protesting his innocence. One of these is preserved at the Waterville Historical Society. It is written to a woman who had expressed sympathy with his fate, and it is filled with pious phrases, at one moment voicing a kind of Stoic resignation, then turning abruptly to bitter vituperation of his enemies. He avows that God will eventually see that justice is done, but he wants to hurry God a bit.

There appeared in Waterville a letter, soon proved to be forged, purporting to be from a man who claimed to have received a confidential confession from Thomas Flint just before Flint's proposed suicide. The interesting point was that Flint had made no attempt to commit suicide and showed not the slightest indication of troubled conscience over the conviction of Coolidge.

Then came a story that a letter had been discovered, written by Coolidge to an accomplice, a released Thomaston convict, arranging for the latter to murder Flint and make it appear as suicide. The forged confession of Flint was to be found in Flint's pocket after the "suicide." Not only was it never proved that Coolidge wrote any such letter to a fellow convict; no one was

ever found who could swear that he actually saw the letter. It seems to have been "just one of those stories."

Alleged quotations from the letter were, however, definite and precise.

Get him in Bath if possible, [Coolidge was supposed to have written,] if not, in Anson. Ask him to examine you for a disease, and when he is about it, stun him with a blow on the back of the neck, then pour contents of the vial into his mouth. Lay him with back of neck against the round of a chair, as if it hit him when he fell, thus explaining the neck bruise. Lay beside him the vial with a little acid left in it. Take the cars the next morning and be off where no one can find you. After I am set at liberty, you will write me a letter so I can then pay you the \$1000. Sign your name John Howard and direct your letter to me at North Livermore, Maine.

In spite of there being no evidence that any plot by Coolidge against Flint was ever contrived, much less put into writing, many people believed it. That Coolidge had motive to work out such a scheme is admitted. The man who was chiefly responsible for the doctor's imprisonment was Tom Flint. Yet it is hardly credible that a man shrewd enough to destroy the letter in his handwriting said to have been shown by Ed to Charles Mathews on that memorable September thirtieth would take the chance of putting into writing such definite instructions for Flint's removal as this story presents.

In October, 1848, after Coolidge had been in the Thomaston prison seven months, the Governor and Council commuted his sentence from hanging to life imprisonment. Why? Did they have doubts of his guilt? Was powerful political influence used in his behalf? The governor at the time was John W. Dana of Fryeburg, who could not possibly have had any personal interest in the case. We have been unable to find any record of this action except the report in Maine newspapers at the time, and none of those reports state more than the mere fact of commutation, giving no reasons for it.

On May 24, 1849, the Waterville *Mail* announced that Dr. Coolidge had died in the prison at Thomaston. Hearing the story, the *Mail* had dispatched a reporter to Thomaston, who talked with the warden and got from him confirmation of the story. The warden said that on May 16, disturbed by rumors of the plot against Flint and the implication that it was possible for two convicts to get together and lay such plans within the prison

walls, he had placed Coolidge in solitary confinement. On the morning of the 18th, a guard, entering Coolidge's cell, found the doctor in convulsions. When the guard tried to quiet him, Coolidge collapsed and died. Medical examination revealed no cause of death. The family in Canton had been notified, and only the day before the reporter's call, Coolidge's brother had come to the prison, claimed the body, and had carried it to Canton for burial.

Conflicting rumors now flew fast and far. Coolidge had committed suicide, to the surprise of the prison staff. He had committed suicide, but not to the warden's surprise, for that officer had helped him do the deed. Coolidge had not committed suicide, but had been murdered. Coolidge wasn't even dead; he had escaped.

One would think that the facts would have been available, at least at the time, even if we cannot sift wheat from chaff a hundred years later. Incredible as it seems, the State of Maine tried for fifty years to determine what actually happened to that life convict at Thomaston. The competence and diligence of numerous investigators were expended in vain.

How was such a mystery possible? The answer is found in the easy-going, careless management then in effect at the state prison at Thomaston. No prison records for the years 1847 to 1849 have ever come to light. So far as any official record at Thomaston is concerned, Coolidge was never there. Other convicted murderers besides Coolidge seem to have had free run of the place. Court orders for solitary confinement were treated as a joke. Prisoners held for lesser crimes than murder were even allowed to leave the place for a week at a time, simply on their personal parole. On the whole, Maine was a law-abiding state, and no one cared much what happened with the few persons the courts sent to Thomaston. The easy, slipshod management of the prison was fertile seed for the extravagant rumors that pursued the Coolidge case for many years.

Just as there was a mysterious woman involved at the trial—the woman who wrote the anonymous letter to the jury—another woman now became the topic of juicy rumor. It was said that, in the spring of 1849, a very attractive woman appeared at Thomaston with a sizeable amount of gold. This she offered to the warden if he would set Coolidge free. He was tempted,

but held out until, along with the money, the woman offered herself in marriage. The warden, a single man, saw here the opportunity for alliance to a wealthy family, for surely a woman with such a bag of gold must have access to more. The *Lewiston Journal* added relish to the story by stating that the woman was Coolidge's sister. What gave point to the tale was that, soon after Coolidge's reported death, the warden resigned and left the state. There is no evidence, however, that he then married any mysterious woman.

The fourth decade of the nineteenth century saw the height of nation-wide agitation against secret societies. A few years earlier, the anti-masonic movement had rocked the very government of the state of New York. In Vermont there were riots and beatings. In Massachusetts an attempted lynching added to the furore. It was almost inevitable, therefore, that the rumor should start that a secret society had managed Coolidge's escape. This time the Odd Fellows were blamed, for Coolidge had joined that society in Waterville in 1846.

Stories were soon circulating that Coolidge had been seen alive—on a Mississippi steamboat, in California, in China, in France. Persons now living in Winslow can recall hearing, in their childhood, a story often repeated by old people of the town. It told how a Winslow man, who had gone to California in the gold rush, just as Solyman Heath of Waterville had done, had written from the gold fields that he had there seen Valorus Coolidge. A few weeks after he wrote that letter, the Winslow man was drowned, under suspicious circumstances.

This sort of rumor is not unusual. It persistently followed Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth. Although the evidence was conclusive that a posse had shot Booth to death in a barn, rumor kept him alive and reported him active in many parts of the world for half a century longer. Indeed, in the Arizona desert as late as 1915, a very aged hermit proclaimed himself to be John Wilkes Booth. Like all other claimants, he was demented. John Wilkes Booth certainly died in 1865.

Attempts have been made to determine when the rumor of Coolidge's escape first appeared in print. The earliest account anyone has found was in a queer publication called *The Screamer*, printed in Skowhegan. In the fall of 1849, that paper announced as fact the escape of Coolidge from Thomaston and his subse-

quent conversation with a Waterville man on a Mississippi steamer. Neither the editor nor anyone else ever identified the Waterville man. If one may judge from other items in *The Screamer*, the editor was quite capable of making up a yarn about Coolidge's escape. Perhaps that escape from Thomaston was accomplished entirely in the imagination of an obscure, eccentric publisher. The most complete printed statement of those many rumors, including the death of a man alleged to be Coolidge in Alameda County, California, is contained in a forty-page pamphlet now in the archives of the Maine Historical Society.

What of the body that the brother took home to Canton from Thomaston? By the summer of 1850 the story got around that, in grief and shame, the father had buried his delinquent son's body in the family lot, determined to say no more about the tragic case. When rumors of Coolidge's escape became persistent, the father got suspicious and ordered the body exhumed. Examination revealed that the hands had ten intact fingers, whereas Valorus Coolidge had lost one finger in boyhood. Nowhere in the records nor in the accounts of the trial is there any mention of Coolidge's having a missing finger. In the many references to anatomy, to medical students' need for "subjects" (that is, cadavers), there is not a word that anyone connected with Coolidge had suffered injury which marred any part of the body. Young Flint was especially alert to such things. We recall how he went out to Percival's store to get a piece of string to measure the head of an abnormal baby.

Now comes the strangest fact of all—for this *is* fact, not rumor. Only a few years ago, while investigating certain phases of this case, Colonel Eaton discovered that, in the year 1854, there was born in Canton a child named Valorus Coolidge. What family in the very town where Dr. Coolidge had lived until he was of voting age—what Canton family, only six years after everyone in Maine had read about the doctor's trial and sentence, would give a child the name of Valorus Coolidge? That's a question to puzzle the Perry Masons and the Nero Wolfes of today.

What happened to Waterville's glamor-boy doctor of the 1840's? Did the warden execute him without waiting for the year to pass or commutation to be granted? Was he murdered in prison by someone afraid of what he might even yet be able

to tell? Did he commit suicide? Did he die a natural death? Did he escape? We shall never know.

There survive today three interesting mementoes of Dr. Valorus Coolidge. Into the hands of the Merrill family of Fairfield came the doctor's saddlebags, probably the very bags he was using when he was hailed by Joseph Hasty on that eventful October morning when he drove into the Williams House yard. At private sale and auction, all of Coolidge's property was sold by order of the court, and the proceeds were distributed among his many creditors. At that sale, someone in the well known Simpson family of Winslow—the same family whose ancestor had been the Kennebec Valley's great benefactor in the Year of No Summer—bought the doctor's desk. Today, more than a hundred years after Dr. Coolidge sat at that desk, making in his accounts the false entry of \$200 against Edward Mathews, that desk reposes in the home of Howard Simpson in Winslow.

The third reminder of Waterville's first murder is a ballad written at the time, and now and again resurrected and reprinted in some Maine newspaper. Mary Ellen Chase, in her interesting account of a Bluehill minister of the early nineteenth century, makes clear to us how common it was to write ballads about murders and hangings. That Bluehill parson made a regular business of it. He would write a ballad, have it printed in Bangor, then sell it in broadside form. Once the parson made a mistake. Counting chickens before they hatched, he wrote a ballad about a hanging that was scheduled to take place in about a month. Arriving at Thomaston, he started to sell his broadsides, but found no one interested to buy. There wouldn't be a hanging; the convicted man had received a commuted sentence, and the parson hadn't heard the news.

It was one of those original broadsides of the Coolidge ballad, circulated not later than 1848, that came to this writer's notice only a few years ago. There is no clue to the author. It is a true broadside, printed on one side of an 8 by 12 sheet. The heading reads: "The Waterville Tragedy, or Death of Edward Mathews, by Dr. Valorus P. Coolidge. Tune—Mary's Dream." Though many times repeated in newspaper columns, we believe this ballad has never before been reproduced within the covers of a book. It seems to have appropriate place amid these stories of Kennebec yesterdays.

Indulgent friends and strangers too,
A thrilling tale I'll tell to you;
'Twill grieve your hearts the thing to hear,
And many an eye will drop a tear.

A mournful tragedy of late
A young man's life did terminate;
The murderer's hand has laid him low,
Which makes our hearts with grief o'erflow.

Poor Edward Mathews, where is he?
Sent headlong to eternity.
The mortal debt by him is paid,
And in his narrow bed he's laid.

No more will anguish seize his soul!
No more will poison fill his bowl!
No more will friendship clutch his throat
And o'er his mangled body gloat!

Oh! V. P. Coolidge, how could you
So black a deed of murder do?
You, on your honor did pretend
To be his dearest earthly friend.

For weeks and months you laid your plan
To kill your friend and fellow man;
You thought the thing to safely do,
Take both his life and money too.

You knew to Brighton he had gone,
And watched each hour for his return;
The pay for cattle which he drave
You swore, within yourself, to have.

You failed in that, but did succeed
By promising a mortgage deed
Of everything you here possessed,
So that he could in safety rest.

The money from the bank he drew
And brought with faithfulness to you;
Not dreaming of your vile intent,
Alone into your office went.

You said, Dear Mathews, worthy friend,
Our friendship here shall never end,
A glass of brandy you must drink;
'Twill do you good, I surely think.

He drank the liquor you had fixed,
With prussic acid amply mixed;
Then cried, O Lord, what can it be?
What poison have you given me?

You grasped his throat and stopped his breath
Until your friend lay still in death;
Then with a hatchet bruised his head
After he was entirely dead.

His money then you took away,
And hid his watch out in your sleigh;
Then called for your confederate
And all your doings did relate.

"I have a secret, Flint," you said,
"And if by you I am betrayed,
The State will me for murder try,
And on the gallows I shall die.

That curs'd Ed Mathews, don't you think,
Came here and did some brandy drink;
Then instantly he fell down dead,
And I have bumped him on the head.

Where can we now his body thrust
So that none can us mistrust?
In yonder room his corpse is laid,
I wish the river were its bed.

The murder we have done this night
Tomorrow will be brought to light;
But my good character and name
Will shield me from all harm and blame.

We dragged his lifeless form away
Into the cellar there to lay,
Until some one by chance did see
His mangled, bruised and dead body.

But O! the deeds of that black night
By Heaven are brought to noonday light;
The horrid deed I can't deny,
And on the gallows I must die.

Poor unsuspecting murdered friend,
My earthly race must shortly end,
And I must stand before my God
And feel his mighty chastening rod.

O! Edward Mathews, could you know
The scathing pangs I undergo,
You surely would look down from Heaven
And say, let Coolidge be forgiven.

I see thy murdered form displayed,
When night has cast its sable shade
Around my dark and lonesome cell—
Such horrid feelings none can tell.

When sleep, that harbinger of rest,
Has spread its mantle o'er my breast,
My thoughts will wander back to thee
And see thee die in agony.

O! youthful days forever past!
I thought thy joys would ever last;
If I had worlds, them would I give
If I once more this life could live.

But all in vain, the die is cast;
The prison walls will hold me fast,
Till to the scaffold I am led,
To yield that life I've forfeited.

Take warning now by me I pray;
Let right and justice guide your way.
May Heaven's choice blessings to you flow
And save you from a murderer's woe."

Chapter XX

WHAT'S THE NEWS?

WHEN the first settlers came to the Kennebec Valley there were no newspapers nearer than Boston. When Fort Halifax was being built, Benjamin Franklin, Philadelphia's leading printer, was busy gathering supplies for Braddock's ill-fated expedition to capture Fort Duquesne. As late as the Revolution, regular periodicals were rare. The verbal fireworks of the time got into print largely through pamphlets and broadsides.

Perhaps, in 1770, some Kennebec settler got hold of the March 12th issue of the *Boston Gazette*. A cherished facsimile copy of that issue, republished on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the event to which it is chiefly devoted, is in my possession. For on March 12, 1770, the *Boston Gazette* gave the first printed account of what history has come to call the Boston Massacre.

The shooting of members of a crowd who were taunting the British soldiers had occurred exactly one week earlier, on March 5. This account was, in fact, published before the fifth victim had died, because it shows a drawing of only four coffins, marked respectively with the initials of the four who had already succumbed to their wounds, including the Negro lad, Crispus Attucks.

Far removed as was Boston from the Kennebec Valley by the tedious travel routes of 1770, this was only a year before four Kennebec towns, including Winslow, received charters of incorporation from the Massachusetts legislature. Probably many Kennebec men found their way to Boston in 1770. If any of them read the *Gazette* of March 12th, they were probably stirred to indignation. If war came, it might not touch them far down in the middle of the District of Maine, but they would cer-

tainly fight red-coated soldiers who shot down unarmed citizens in the streets.

Most of us have been brought up to believe there was only one side to that Boston incident, that innocent men were shot down by brutal troops. But the cold facts of history do not so record. As is often the case, there were two sides to the Boston Massacre. John Adams gained, rather than lost prestige, when he defended and secured the acquittal of the British commander. The crowd which snowballed and taunted the British guards was not made up of respected and substantial citizens, not even of the historic Sons of Liberty. It was rather an assemblage of young men and boys, led by half a dozen toughs. Most of the youth in that crowd would never have created the mob scene that finally precipitated the difficulty. But like plenty of other lads before and since, they were susceptible to excited leadership. Most ironical of all, those leaders were not demonstrating patriots; they were just out to have fun with the "lobster-backs."

All this does not excuse the soldiers' use of firearms. That extremity should have been avoided. Regardless of how much provocation the mob gave, five of their number ought not to have died. The final decision of the court which acquitted the commander, was that certain of the soldiers should be punished by branding of the hands. But no one was ever convicted of manslaughter, much less of murder. Tradition has indeed given the incident an unfortunate name. It was hardly a massacre.

The reader of the six-column account in the *Gazette* would have no doubt about which side the editor took. Those long columns, flanked by wide mourning bands of black, make it plain that the *Gazette* placed all the blame on the British garrison, and the editor vehemently demanded the withdrawal of the hated troops from the town. Yet, in this very issue of the paper is an item that casts considerable light on the event. The commander of the detail which had done the shooting had been arrested and held for later trial. Feeling in Boston ran high. One might even expect a lynching mob to try to get hold of that commander. But nothing of the sort happened. Not only did calm leadership prevail, but Boston was not all of one mind on the issue. How do we know that? By a tiny item that appears in the same issue of the *Gazette* which tells the story of the "massacre." At the

end of the very column in which is printed the drawing of the four coffins appears the following notice:

Boston Goal, Monday, 12th March 1770

Messeurs Edes and Gill,

Permit me thro' the Channel of your Paper, to return my Thanks in the most Public Manner to the Inhabitants in general of this Town—who throwing aside all Party and Prejudice, have with the utmost Humanity and Freedom stept forth Advocates for Truth, in Defense of my injured Innocence, in the late unhappy Affair that happened on Monday night last; and to assure them that I shall ever have the highest Sense of the Justice they have done me, which will be ever gratefully remembered by

Their much obliged and most obedient humble servant,

THOMAS PRESTON.

Thomas Preston was the British commander who was accused of ordering the troops to fire on the crowd.

Another facsimile in my files is that of Volume I, Number 1, of the *Falmouth Gazette*, published in old Falmouth, now Portland, on January 1, 1785. One of its founders was Benjamin Titcomb, an original incorporator and early trustee of what is now Colby College. He and his partner, Thomas Waite, announced in that first issue:

From the generous encouragement of a number of respectable persons of Falmouth, as well as in other towns of this and the neighboring counties, we have undertaken to publish a weekly newspaper in this place, and now present them with the first number of the *Falmouth Gazette*. We beg every patron of the press to afford us that support, which in an infant country will be particularly necessary to enable us to carry on the business with advantage to ourselves and those to whom we shall devote our time and talents.

That paper was a four-page sheet of three columns. Two columns of the first page were taken by an article called "An Address on the New Year," copied from the *Westminster Magazine*. There were ship items, including news the ships brought from London, Belfast, and Sligo. A message from Boston recounted the financial difficulties of the time. Two columns were devoted to "Some general account of the dispute between Holland and Germany." Another column explained "the causes which have induced Ireland to take up arms." Down in one corner of a page are given the "rates at which coined gold and silver, and English half-pence and farthings, shall pass in this Commonwealth." The conversions are all in shillings and pence,

but in values established by the Massachusetts legislature, not by the Continental Congress. Dollars and cents were not in use in 1785. A nine-stanza poem proclaimed the New Year. In all four pages there is not a scrap of local news. Was it likely that nothing worthy of note happened in Portland between Christmas and New Years in 1784? No. That is not likely. The new paper was simply following the common practice of printing literary items, usually copied from British journals, and news from abroad brought by the in-coming ships. But anyhow, it was a start. At last Falmouth had a newspaper of its own.

The first five towns in the Kennebec Valley had held their charters nearly a quarter of a century before the region saw its first native newspaper. On August 4, 1794, Howard Robinson published at Hallowell the first issue of the *Eastern Star*, the Valley's first periodical. It lasted just one year, when it was succeeded by the *Tocsin*, published by the men who were already bringing out the *Falmouth Gazette* in Portland. Before 1830 at least a dozen papers had appeared in Hallowell, the longest lived of which was the *Hallowell Gazette*, a federal paper, which lasted from 1814 to 1827.

Augusta's first paper was the *Kennebec Intelligencer*, started in 1795 when Augusta was still a part of Hallowell. In 1800 its name was changed to the *Kennebec Gazette*, and again in 1810 to the *Herald of Liberty*.

The Valley's oldest existing paper is the *Kennebec Journal*, which has enjoyed continuous publication since 1823. In his *History of Kennebec County*, Kingsbury gives this account of its origin: "*The Kennebec Journal* grew out of the dominant political sentiment which afterward became crystalized as the Whig party. In the fall of 1823, two young men, journeymen printers, came from Washington, D. C., and started the paper. Their names were Luther Severance and Russell Eaton. The Tufts hand press on which it was printed was set up at the Branch brick block on the corner of Bridge and Water streets, where the first number was struck off on January 8, 1823. It was a hard struggle for the two young men. Like Horace Greeley, Severance was able to go to the case and put into type, out of his head, an elaborate unwritten editorial. Eaton ran the mechanical and business departments."

This chapter is no place to tell the long, illustrious story of the *Kennebec Journal's* 130 years of service to the Valley, and indeed to the whole state. It was long regarded as the official news dispenser of the legislative sessions. Its editorials have prompted many reforms. For three years, just before the Civil War, its principal owner and chief editorial writer was James G. Blaine. It became a daily in 1870.

Among other newspapers and periodicals published at Augusta before 1900, with their dates of founding, were the *Gospel Banner*, 1835; the *Maine Patriot and State Gazette*, 1827; *The Age*, 1831; the *Maine Farmer*, 1833; *Drew's Rural Intelligencer*, 1855; the *Maine Standard*, 1867; the *Home Farm*, 1880; *The New Age*, 1881; and the *Eastern Farmer*, 1887.

The first newspaper in Waterville was the *Waterville Intelligencer*, published by William Hastings, the town's first printer, in 1823. It had a precarious existence, actually missing two or three issues, until 1828, when Hastings changed its name to *The Watchman*. As such it lasted only a year, when Hastings had to give it up for lack of support. In 1831, John Burleigh started *The Times*. Although it had to give up after two years, Burleigh was persistent, and in 1834 he started the *Waterville Journal*. That too had to suspend publication after a single year.

In 1842 two men who were long to be associated with the press in Waterville started a paper called the *Watervillonian*. They were Daniel Wing and William Mathews, the latter the older brother of Ed Mathews, who three years later would give notoriety to Waterville as the town's first murder victim. William Mathews went on to fame as author and lecturer, while Wing pursued a career as publisher and printer for more than half a century.

The name *Watervillonian* was apparently too much of a mouthful, and in 1843 it was changed to the *Yankee Blade*. Discouraged by lack of local support, the publishers moved the paper to Gardiner in 1844, where after only two years it was again moved to Boston and finally merged with an older paper called the *Olive Branch*.

One of Waterville's most dynamic characters near the close of the first half of the nineteenth century was C. F. Hathaway, founder of the still flourishing Hathaway Shirt Company. A religious zealot, Hathaway started a Sunday School on the

"Plains," as the French-Canadian section of the town was called. He was an active promoter of the already established Baptist mission in that region. He was interested in many civic enterprises, and in 1847 tried his hand at newspaper publication. Hathaway had published his paper, *The Union*, only four months when he induced Ephraim Maxham to take it over under the new name of the *Eastern Mail*. In 1849, Maxham and Daniel Wing bought out Hathaway's interest, and began a partnership that lasted for many years, making the *Mail* one of the most influential papers in the state. In 1863 the title was changed to the *Waterville Mail*.

For twenty-six years the *Kennebec Journal* was the only daily paper in the Valley. Then, in 1896, the publishers of the *Waterville Mail* decided the time had come for Waterville to have a daily. The *Waterville Evening Mail* published its first daily issue on January 29, 1896. It continued for many years after a morning daily was established, but finally succumbed, like many other evening papers in the smaller cities.

On December 1, 1880, on the third floor of what is now part of the Emery-Brown Building on Waterville's Main Street, was printed the first issue of the *Waterville Sentinel*. It was at first only a four page, seven column paper, and like the *Mail* at that time, was a weekly. It recognized the existence of its competitor by saying in its first issue: "We do not propose to crowd others out by crowding ourselves in, but we mean to find a place or make one."

When the *Mail* became a daily in 1896, Samuel Burleigh, then the *Sentinel's* publisher, brought out his paper twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays. He soon found that the venture did not pay, and in 1897 he changed back to weekly publication. Not until March 3, 1904, did the *Sentinel* become a daily, but as a morning paper with substantial financial backing, it rapidly overcame its evening competitor and now, for many years, as the *Waterville Morning Sentinel* has been the Elm City's only newspaper.

Like most Maine towns after the Civil War, Waterville was rabidly Republican in the 1880's. Yet it always had a substantial number of leading Democrats. One of these was an unusual character named Ben Bunker. Encouraged by Cleveland's defeat of Blaine in 1884, Ben decided to start a newspaper in Water-

ville, with the result that the *Kennebec Democrat* began weekly publication on February 2, 1887. In that issue Bunker declared: "The *Kennebec Democrat* will be Democratic seven days in the week, hot or cold, sunshine or darkness." One who enjoys peppery reading has only to turn to the files of that Waterville newspaper of 60 years ago. Whenever someone disagreed with Bunker, the editor launched a venomous attack, perilously close to libel. He even caricatured some of his enemies by the use of wood-cuts which he personally whittled out with a jack-knife. So lively was the paper and so dynamic and persistent was its editor that, in spite of competition from both the *Mail* and the *Sentinel*, the *Democrat* kept going until Bunker's death in 1894.

Newspapers in the nineteenth century were not restricted to the larger towns; many a smaller Kennebec community had its weekly paper. One such was the *China Orb*. Started in 1834, it carried at its masthead the following statement: "The *China Orb* is published every Saturday by an association of gentlemen. Devoted to agriculture and the mechanic arts; temperance; religious, literary and political intelligence; and whatever else is calculated to render a weekly journal interesting, useful and pleasing. The undertaking is expensive; therefore the patronage of a generous public is respectfully solicited. Two dollars a year is paid any time within a year. A discount of 12½ per cent will be made if payment is made within three months. No paper will be discontinued until all arrearages are paid."

The *Orb* was a strong supporter of Andrew Jackson, who in 1835 was in his second term as President. Jackson called himself a Democrat, but the *Orb* refers to his party as Republican. This calls for a modern explanation, because those two party terms have quite different meanings today. The present Republican party was not born until 1854, twenty years after the *Orb* started publication. The party which the *Orb* supported was the old party of Thomas Jefferson, variously called Democratic and Republican, but which officially bore the hyphenated name of Democratic-Republican. They were the anti-federalists, the strong supporters of states' rights, and after the passing of the Federalist party, the Democratic-Republicans became the vigorous opponents of the Whigs. By 1834 the Jacksonians had come to be called Democrats in most of the states, but for some reason their Maine supporters preferred the term Republican. Perhaps

the *China Orb* was only following the example of the influential *Kennebec Journal* in calling the Jacksonians Republicans.

In 1834, Maine's first governor, William King, was still living. The *China Orb* had no use for him, distinguished as he was, because King was a Whig. In fact the editor of the *Orb* so hated the Whigs that, in derision, he frequently spelled the name Wigs. Concerning a social gathering at General King's Bath home, the *Orb* vented its scorn: "On the return of the members of the Federal convention from Augusta, the steamboat touched at Bath, and the passengers were invited to the house of General King. After drinking as much old wine as they pleased, the company prepared to depart. The candidate for Congress, Mr. Brooks, thanked the General for his hospitality and congratulated him on having spurned all rewards to induce him to desert the Wig banner. That was an unkind cut. It is well known that General King did not spurn any reward until he was sure it was vain for him to seek one. He was a warm friend of the Jackson administration until he found he must lose his office. Then he became a Wig of the first water. His old federal principles, his insatiable desire for office, and above all his patriotic conduct during the last war, in ministering to the wants of a foreign enemy, have rendered him a fit associate for the Wig party. They are welcome to him."

Twenty-five years after the *China Orb* first appeared, the most famous name in American journalism was that of Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*. But in 1834 Greeley was a young, relatively unknown publisher. In the *China Orb* he inserted an advertisement of a kind he was doubtless sending to most of the weekly papers in New England. Greeley then called his new paper the *New Yorker*. He announced that it would "combine more completely than any of its rivals the distinguishing characteristics of a literary journal with those of a regular, systematic chronicle of passing events."

Evidently the *New Yorker* had had a predecessor of the same name, just as today it has a very distinguished successor. Greeley wanted to dispel any confusion in the public mind. His ad said: "The *New Yorker* has no connection with an ephemeral affair of the same title, which had a brief existence last season. But in order to free our good name from all opprobrium, we

hereby agree to send our paper free to all patrons of that defunct sheet for the whole term for which they paid that publisher."

It is my personal opinion that, unwittingly and through no personal intent, Horace Greeley was responsible for the rise of daily newspapers in Maine. Although Portland and Bangor had dailies as early as 1855, after the Civil War they sprang into existence rapidly, in one larger Maine community after another. Before the war most people had been content to get their news once a week. Life was leisurely; there was no sense in hurrying about anything. The Central Maine farmers whose sons were lured to California or Australia by the gold rush were unconcerned when two months elapsed without a letter from the wanderer. Only after a year or more of silence did they get anxious.

The war changed all that. Few Maine families had been concerned with the Mexican conflict in the '40's, and only the older people remembered the War of 1812. Here at last was a national crisis that affected every home. As a consequence, all the people, even in remote rural districts, wanted to know every day, day by day, the news from the front. Over in Oxford County, in the little hamlet of Hebron, famous then only for its school founded in 1804, Charles Tripp, grandson of the town's first minister and co-founder of the Academy, made a contract with the villagers to go afoot daily to West Minot, to pick up a copy of Greeley's *New York Tribune*, which the stage driver left at the post office at that cross-roads. Charles Tripp's sister, Miss Carrie Tripp, who died in Hebron at the age of 84, rich in memories of the old days, has often told me how, when Charles arrived with the paper, the men would gather at the village store, where the best readers would take turns reading the news to the company. I suspect this practice prevailed all over Maine. The mail cars of the A & K and the P & K railroads, both of which entered Waterville in the 1860's, regularly brought several copies of the *Tribune* for local distribution.

After this digression, let us get back to the *China Orb*. An advertisement in its issue of April 5, 1835, reminds us that the old name of East Vassalboro was Outlet Village:

To let—the farm now owned by William Blish of Vassalboro, about 40 rods south of the Outlet Village. The situation is very pleasant, commanding a full view of the village and pond. Privileges of every kind are handy,

such as store, blacksmith shop, grist mill, saw mill, carding and spinning machines, and various other machinery carried on by water.

In the same issue a departing physician was trying to collect overdue bills: "Dr. A. Hatch will positively leave the town of China for the eastern country, on the first of September next. All persons who wish to settle their accounts with him will do well to call before that time." The eastern country to which Dr. Hatch was departing turns out to be Ellsworth.

These rural weeklies of the early 1800's contained very little of what we would call news. They were, as they proclaimed themselves to be, literary, religious and political journals. In all the issues of the *China Orb* for the years 1834 and 1835 one finds not a single item of local news. If one wants to know what is happening locally he must gather his information from advertisements, like the sale of the Outlet farm or the notice of the departing doctor. In those two years the *Orb* carried just one news item which even had a Maine locale. It was brief and to the point: "At a fire in Oldtown last month a man named McCarthy was run over by a fire engine and suffered a broken arm."

One of the most unusual newspapers ever printed in Maine or anywhere else once appeared in Vassalboro. In March, 1886, the reading public was favored with Volume 1, Number 1, of the *Clarion*, published by S. A. and N. C. Burleigh. No one would guess, unless he knew the family, that the second name was female, none other than Miss Nettie Burleigh, who only a few years ago retired from active participation in Maine politics. Her partner in this newspaper enterprise was her brother Sam, afterwards the distinguished editor of the Waterville *Sentinel*.

The unusual thing about this newspaper was not that one of its editors was female, but the age of both editors. Sam Burleigh was then only fifteen years old, and his sister was even younger. With a small hand press which they had somehow acquired, along with a very modest set of type, the Burleigh children produced, on that March day in 1886, the first issue of the *Clarion*, a tiny four-page sheet, six by five and one-half inches.

With considerable enterprise, the publishers printed three display advertisements. One announced that Lizzie Taylor, fashionable dressmaker, made cutting and fitting a specialty at North Fairfield. Another said that the Long Farm at Vassalboro had Plymouth Rocks for sale. The third stated that Miss Mary Mor-

rierson of Vassalboro had a good second-hand Davis Machine for sale. There was space for a fourth ad, which the youngsters evidently failed to sell, for they printed therein, "This space is reserved for our patrons."

The *Clarion* would have been no newspaper for its times, if like its more distinguished contemporaries it did not announce its editorial policy. Sam and Nettie's intent was stated as follows: "To our patrons: With this our first issue we launch our little bark upon the boundless sea of literature, trusting in the charity of our fellow voyagers to overlook anything that resembles incompetency and to encourage our labors so far as they meet with approval. Our object is the dissemination of truth and temperance, and the advancement of scientific and practical knowledge among our fellow men."

The Burleigh children announced their advertising rates as ten cents an inch, 45 cents a column, 85 cents a page. They proposed to publish the paper monthly. Of course it is not unusual for children to start a paper, especially if someone gives them a printing press, but it is not so usual for such a paper to continue publication beyond two or three issues. Most of the Burleigh neighbors probably expected Sam and Nettie soon to tire of the little press in the upstairs room. How surprised those neighbors must have been to see that little paper not only appear month after month, but increase in size and win such popular approval that, by 1888, it had a monthly circulation of more than a thousand copies. By that time its crude, childish printing had disappeared, and a neat four-pager, ten by eight inches, three columns to the page, heralded Volume 3, Number 1, of the *Clarion*.

By 1888 the advertisements in the *Clarion* were much more numerous. Hall and Meader, with stores at both Vassalboro and North Vassalboro, carried the biggest ad—two columns of four inches. They declared they would "cut prices on fertilizers if other firms do." Mrs. H. C. Minot of Belgrade did a good business in bees and honey, but she had an interesting side line, "the Novelty Slate Pencil Sharpener at seven cents, two for twelve cents." The original subscription rate of the *Clarion* had been twenty cents a year. In 1888 it had risen to thirty cents. Eager to get news from surrounding towns, the Burleighs now inserted an ad of their own: "Wanted—correspondents in different parts

of Vassalboro, China, Winslow and Sidney, to send us news items. We will furnish writing material and stamps, and will send the *Clarion* free."

Through 1889, 1890 and most of 1891 the *Clarion* continued to ring out its monthly peal. Then Sam departed for Colby College, but even before the college year opened he had launched a more ambitious publication than the *Clarion*. On September 1, 1891, he brought out Volume 1, Number 1, of the *Kennebec Valley News*, published at Vassalboro. Evidently Sam had considered the *Clarion* a monthly periodical of literature, rather than a newspaper, despite his appeal for local correspondents, for in that first issue of the *Valley News*, he said: "At last our dreams are realized and Vassalboro has a newspaper. Here we are! Another literary infant thrust upon the mercies of a cold world. We don't propose to pander to the whims of anyone, be they male or female, saint or sinner, Prohibitionist, Democrat or Republican. We shall try to help warm this cold world by turning into it the Gulf Stream of charity and benevolence." Good old Sam! He still loved the flamboyant rhetoric that had marked the first issue of the *Clarion* when he was only fifteen.

The *Valley News* was no tiny monthly, but rather a full sized four-page weekly, published every Tuesday. Already Sam had made good connections in Waterville, and his first issue contained many Waterville ads. Sam Preble, who several times took this writer's picture along with other Colby students of the 1910's, offered in Sam's paper "life sized crayon portraits for six dollars." S. A. Estes announced that his store in the Plaisted block was the place to buy boots, shoes and rubbers; but on the same page Loud Brothers had a bigger ad, saying: "Look here! Why don't you buy your boots and shoes at Louds?" Harmon, Webber and Dunham wanted Vassalboro readers to try their new Royal Atlantic cooking range. W. H. Tucker and Co. asked, "Did you ever know that there is a drug store in the Arnold Block, Waterville? When you are sick, do you have Mr. Tucker and Mr. Larrabee, both registered apothecaries, put up your medicine? If not, you had better begin right away and get fair prices on all goods, not be robbed on goods you know little about."

By 1888 the safety bicycle had pretty well replaced the old-fashioned big front-wheel vehicles. Sam Burleigh, always alert for a quick, honest dollar, was himself agent for the Columbia

bicycle, which his pictured ad in the *Valley News* announced as the best wheel for business and pleasure. He also offered two second-hand Columbias "for sale cheap."

After his graduation from Colby, Sam Burleigh became publisher of the *Waterville Sentinel*, as we have previously noted, and he was largely responsible for that paper's conspicuous success at the turn of the century.

Sam was not the first Burleigh to achieve journalistic fame. Mrs. Thomas Burleigh of Waterville has generously furnished me with information about her late husband's publishing ancestor John Burleigh. As we have previously stated, it was John Burleigh who started the *Waterville Times* in 1831, and after that folded up, launched the *Waterville Journal* in 1834. Mrs. Thomas Burleigh has shown me a yellowed copy of that paper, dated September 23, 1834. Although he had published only a few issues, John was already fed up. He announced: "Printing establishment for sale. The subscriber, wishing to close his business in this village, the ensuing winter, and knowing from experience that it requires a long time to settle newspaper bills, offers for sale the printing office of this paper. Possession will be given at any time. Also for sale, the house he occupies; it being large and near the Academy, is well situated for a boarding house."

Another Burleigh, Clarence, was at one time part owner and editor of the *Kennebec Journal*. One day Clarence was so engrossed in getting into shape for print a story of the Maine woods that, instead of going home to dinner at noon, he entered an Augusta restaurant, taking along his rough drafts and proof sheets, to keep busy while he ate. When the waiter appeared, Burleigh ordered baked beans. The waiter, an old acquaintance, served him without a word, then said wistfully, "Mr. Burleigh, do you know what day it is?"

"Why, Beckett," said Burleigh, "that's a fool question. Of course I know what day it is. It's Thursday."

"I know that, Mr. Burleigh," said the waiter, "but that's not what I meant. Don't you know this is Thanksgiving Day? You ought to be having dinner at home with your family."

"Huh!" muttered Burleigh, "bring me another plate of beans."

Another rural paper in the Valley was the *Clinton Advertiser*. Benjamin Foster, Clinton's undertaker and furniture dealer started it in 1877. After a time he took into partnership Miss Etta Pratt, and for many years, until 1903, the *Advertiser* was published every week by Foster and Pratt. After Miss Pratt's death Foster sold the paper to Marcellus Cain, who published it until 1908, when he in turn sold it to William Tracey. Tracey, who kept the paper going for about a year, is quoted as saying there was more glory than dollars in printing a paper in Clinton. The little weekly publication bowed out in 1909.

Those publishers did exceedingly well to keep a paper going, week after week for thirty-two years, in a little village like Clinton. Unlike many similar papers, the *Advertiser* devoted much space to what it called "Home Items." Though some of them were scarcely what we would today call news, they were on subjects we still talk about. "When is it going to clear off? The steady rain of the last two days has caused the river to rise to a very high pitch for this time of year. So much stormy weather has greatly hindered the work on the Free Baptist Church, which it was hoped to have finished before cold weather."

In its issue of October 11, 1888, the *Advertiser* announced that Mrs. Elvin Jaquith had made over a hundred dollars worth of cheese, Secretary Gilbert of the Maine Board of Agriculture had met with Clinton farmers, Mrs. Lucy Witham of Richmond had committed suicide by taking "Rough on Rats," and the Reverend Osgood had preached a sermon on "The Interest Felt by Angels in Man's Salvation."

Again, in the Clinton paper of 1888, as in the *China Orb* of 1834, it is the advertisements that best reveal the times. B. T. Foster, the publisher, ran a full column ad of his own, announcing that he sold not only lounges, chamber sets, looking glasses, crockery and curtains, but also a full line of caskets and burial shrouds. His last item reads: "Good cloth caskets, \$12 and upwards."

Two carriage manufacturers, craftsmen in a now departed trade, advertised their skill in Clinton. Tool-maker J. P. Billings advertised, in words reminiscent of Parson Weems' apocryphal yarn about George Washington: "I cannot tell a lie, either. I did it with one of Billings' axes. All kinds of edge tools manufactured by J. P. Billings, Clinton, Maine." C. H. Piper de-

cided, now that the crops were in, it was time he was paid for last spring's fertilizer. He advertised: "Notice. All parties indebted to me for phosphate please settle their account on or before November first." The ad of Clinton dentist D. G. Webber deserves special attention: "Gas free for extracting teeth."

Editor Foster rendered sound historical service when, for several issues in 1888, he published accounts of Clinton in the town's early days. One of these stories tells how, in 1846, James Hunter won his famous law suit against the town of Clinton. The Hunters were a renowned Clinton family, among the town's earliest settlers. Three brothers, James, David, and Zimri, operated several substantial businesses in the 1840's, including Clinton's largest saw mill. In 1845 James had floated a raft of lumber down the Seabasticook. At the village it had run against an abutment of the bridge with such impact that it broke up, and the logs went on their wild, unrecoverable way down the Seabasticook and the Kennebec. Hunter claimed damages from the town, and, believe it or not, he collected.

In our chapter on "Schooling on the Kennebec" we have referred to the practice of personal criticism of individual teachers by supervisors and agents in their annual printed reports. The only retaliation we have ever seen from such an attacked teacher appeared in the *Clinton Advertiser* on March 20, 1890. A Clinton teacher expressed her indignation at what had been published about her in the town report. Good for her! And good for Editor Foster, who let her have her say.

One of the strangest papers ever seen in the Valley was the *Sharpshooter*, published at Waterville in 1884. It was the local organ of the Grand Army of the Republic. Its issue of February 28, 1884, which is Volume 1, Number 3, carries in the upper left corner the words "W. S. Heath Post No. 14, GAR," and in the upper right corner "Published at the *Sentinel* Office." A first page center spread advertises the GAR Fair, with a camp scene "Comrades, touch the Elbows." Except for a few paragraphs about veterans' affairs in various parts of New England, the paper consisted entirely of advertisements. There was Mrs. O. F. Mayo of Park Street, teacher of Kensington, Arrasene and Chenille embroidery, who also did dry and liquid stamping to order. I. S. Bangs had just received a carload of choice patent flour, which he offered at \$6.40 a barrel. Redington and Company

would give you "a finely conducted funeral." A. Thompson was giving away candy, but with a catch to it. His ad read: "Every purchase of a pound of candy is entitled to a card. When you get twenty cards, present them to me and I will give you one pound of any candy you select."

Although Belfast is not in the Kennebec Valley, it is near enough for its famous newspaper to rate inclusion in this chapter. In the 1850's the Belfast *Republican Journal* was one of Maine's best known papers. Like many of the others, it had several rates of subscription. If paid in advance, the rate was \$1.50 a year; if paid within one year, \$2.00; if not paid until after a year's copies had been received, it was \$2.50. Unlike the situation today, when the postal laws demand payment in advance of all periodical subscriptions, a subscriber's copies were not stopped if he fell into arrears. Subscribers often refused to take their copies from the post office, but even then the law protected the publisher until arrearages were paid, when of course a subscriber could then cancel his subscription. Court costs and lawyer's fees, however, were too expensive to warrant the average publisher's bringing suit against a subscriber, with the result that many a paper went into bankruptcy because folks just didn't pay. In 1852, the *Republican Journal* published this warning: "No paper discontinued until all arrearages are paid. All letters and communications, to secure attention, must be post-paid."

That last sentence reveals another nuisance a hundred years ago—sending letters with postage to be paid by the receiver. If a Kennebecker wanted to vent his wrath on someone down in Portland, for instance, he could just send him a postage collect letter, even write him a voluminous document of a dozen or more pages, weighing several ounces. The writer could not only get the satisfaction of telling the other fellow what he thought of him, but could make his adversary pay for the privilege of reading it. But it was not all one way. The Portland man could retaliate. He could write an even longer letter, use heavier paper, and make his attacker pay the postage.

Human curiosity being what it is, most letters were delivered and paid for, but occasionally some cantankerous character would let his mail pile up in the post office rather than pay the postage. Such a man was one of Abraham Lincoln's cus-

tomers when Lincoln was the young postmaster at New Salem, Illinois. Lincoln finally took a pig in payment for accumulated postage and sold the pig to the father of Ann Rutledge. When he had to make up to the government the missing postage on the man's accumulated letters, Lincoln found he had lost 32 cents on the deal. We have no record of such occurrences in the Kennebec Valley, but we would not be surprised to learn that they often occurred.

In an issue of the *Republican Journal* in 1852, appears one of Maine's earliest references to summer tourists. Appended to the conventional ad of the American House in Belfast, is this statement: "To those who are looking for a pleasant resort during the warm months, we would say that Belfast, in its scenery, air and location, is one of the finest places in the state."

The Belfast *Republican Journal* is indeed one of Maine's oldest newspapers. Started in 1829, it is still being published in 1954. It is one of the best of Maine's surviving weeklies, indeed one of the best weekly papers in the nation. Usually a paper of eight pages, it often runs an issue of fourteen or sixteen pages. Its make-up is like the city dailies, and its news items are unusually well written. It contains surprisingly little "boiler plate," the publishing industry's term for filler material provided by the syndicates. Almost every item is home made and of home interest. Long live Maine's hundred and twenty-five year old newspaper, the Belfast *Republican Journal*!

A good date on which to examine how Maine fared for newspapers is the year after the close of the Civil War, 1866. The state then had six dailies, two in Portland, two in Bangor, and one each in Bath and Lewiston. The Portland dailies were the *Eastern Argus* and the *Advertiser*. Bangor had the *Whig and Courier* and the *Evening Times*. The Bath paper bore the same name that it still has today and that it had under the long editorship of Colby graduate, Frank Nichols, the *Bath Times*. The Lewiston daily, forerunner of what was long Maine's best known evening news sheet, was then called the *Lewiston Falls Journal*.

Besides the six dailies, Maine had 72 newspapers in 1866, most of them published weekly, although a few were really religious or literary journals appearing only once or twice a month. The *Aroostook Times*, the *Oxford Democrat*, the *Piscataquis Observer*, the *Somerset Farmer*, the *Portland Transcript* and the

Ellsworth American are well remembered. In fact a few of them are still published. But the *Saco Democrat*, the *Paris Pioneer*, the *Skowhegan Clarion*, the *Brighton Reporter*, the *Richmond Rising Sun*, and the *Dexter Gem and Democrat* are forgotten by all except antiquarians. The religious journals ran the alphabet from the *Augusta Age* to *Zion's Advocate*. At Mount Vernon was published a monthly called the *Young Folks' Monitor*, while in Portland they tried to take care of the young people through the *Maine Teacher*.

As examples of how even very small communities sometimes boasted a paper, Minot had two, the monthly *Golden Wreath and Ladies' Advocate* and the *Down Easter*; Danville put out the *Democratic Advocate*; Anson had its *Somerset Spectator*, and Vienna its *Glenwood Valley Times*.

Typical of many papers a hundred years ago was Drew's *Rural Intelligencer*. Like the *Belfast Republican Journal*, the *Intelligencer* had three subscription rates, depending upon when the subscriber paid. Editor Drew cautioned: "Let us understand these terms, then there will be no partiality and no cause for complaint. The great discount is made for the sake of encouraging payments in advance, which are best for all concerned."

It was Editor Drew, not the subscribers, who subsequently had cause to complain. On February 27, 1855, he printed this notice: "Some of our subscribers, in forwarding us their nine shillings (that was \$1.50) for a year's subscription, have enclosed in their letter a single dollar bill and fifty cents in silver, paying the postage of three cents in advance. But in every such case our faithful postmaster has noticed that the weight of the coin subjects the letter to double postage, and therefor has obliged us to pay five cents more. When one subscriber cannot write with another so as to send us three dollars in one bill, they should send fifty cents in stamps."

That phrase "three dollars in one bill" causes the reader to pause. How could anybody submit three dollars in one bill? Whoever saw a three dollar bill? Well, I for one have. A few years ago my friend Bill Kenworthy, Waterville's famed dealer in old coins and currency, made me a present of a three dollar bill, new and almost unused, issued by the Washington County Bank at Calais in 1834. It was indeed possible for Editor Drew

to receive a three dollar bill in payment for two advanced subscriptions at \$1.50 each.

Probably there are plenty of persons still living who remember when central heating was denounced, not only as extravagant waste, but also as unhealthful, and there may be a few among us who can even recall people who denounced bathrooms as invitations to an early grave. But our readers may be completely surprised to know that there was a time when stoves met the same kind of attack. The new air-tight stoves of the early 1850's were one of Editor Drew's pet hates, and he let loose with all the power of his pen.

We are tempted to declare war against the whole stove system, now so common in our towns, and even in the country. We believe that stoves cause many of the diseases, particularly consumption, which have been making such fatal progress of late. Our fathers before the Revolution used no stoves. They warmed themselves by the free air heated from an open fireplace, and who ever heard of consumption among the Pilgrim Fathers? In rooms heated by an open fire, the air is always sweeter and purer, and consequently more healthy. But in sitting rooms and parlors heated by stoves, the air is dull and heavy, and besides you must always have cold feet. What is more cheerless to approach, when it is cold, than a dark, black stove? We're going to be a lot poorer than we are now before we dispense with our open fire. Stoves are not economical. They cost a lot in the first place. Then quite often they are broken, burned out, or out of fashion. For them the wood must be cut short, split fine, and carefully seasoned, and when it is put into the stove, the draft burns it up faster than a man can prepare it. On the other hand, an open fire lets its big logs linger with glowing heat all day. And don't forget the light you get from an open fire on a winter's evening. It is easily equal to two oil lamps in the room.

Two weeks later, Editor Drew returned to the subject with glee. From nearby Richmond he had received confirmation of his stand against stoves. He wrote: "Our article on the cheerless and unhealthy effects of air-tight stoves begins to take effect. An intelligent gentleman in Richmond wrote us last Monday that, after reading what we said on the subject, he got up very early on Monday morning, and before the rest of the family were out of bed, he had removed the air-tight stove from the sitting room. When, one after another, the members of the family came into the room, each face gleamed with a radiant smile as it was lightened by the cheerful rays of a blazing fire from an open fire frame. To all others who, like our Richmond subscriber, would

not have smoky houses and scolding wives, we say, go thou and do likewise."

Not even the grouchy editor of the *Rural Intelligencer* could stop the wheels of progress. We shudder at what he would say about the modern oil heater, the electric range, and the washing machine. As for bottled gas, whoof! Throughout all our history there have been reactionaries like that Augusta editor, men of whom old Ben Franklin said, "There are croakers in every country, always boding its ruin."

Yes, even before the days of telephone or radio, Maine people did get the news. Over tiny presses in stuffy or chilly offices, patient men set type, turned the hand presses, wheedled ads from the merchants, took pay in produce and fuel, dodged irate citizens whose names were unfavorably mentioned, and waited long months, sometimes hopelessly for subscribers to pay. Most of them did it because they had a passion for the game, an uncontrollable urge to put their ideas on a printed page. Anyhow, thanks to those devoted souls, Maine folks a hundred years ago did get the news.

Chapter XXI

WAIT AND SEE

ON March 4, 1857, William Bryant of Fairfield wrote in his diary: "This day Mr. Buchanan enters upon the duties of his office as President of the United States. What will he do about the great question? Let us wait and see."

William Bryant, farmer and selectman of Fairfield throughout most of the nineteenth century's first fifty years, was a man who appreciated both the value and the limits of suspended judgment. Not bad advice for us today—his suspended judgment about James Buchanan. Speculation on many problems of our own day is just as futile as was a Fairfield farmer's speculation on Buchanan's future action. It is often best for us just to "wait and see."

Nevertheless, William Bryant was no fence sitter, unable to make up his mind. He was no donkey, starving to death between two stacks of hay, because he couldn't decide which one to eat. He had taken his stand on "the great question," and to his faithful diary he committed his convictions: "It belongs to the free inhabitants of our country to choose which they will serve, Freedom or Slavery. I say no union with slavery as things go at this time. No more slave states, north or south, hereafter—that is my stand."

Who was this man William Bryant, who could take such firm anti-slavery stand, yet refrain from prejudging the new president? He seems to be a man worthy of more intimate acquaintance. Perhaps he can teach us other qualities besides that of suspended judgment.

William Bryant's eighty-six years covered an eventful expansion period in the Kennebec Valley. Born at Sandwich, Massachusetts, in 1781, he married a Rhode Island girl, Lydia Haley. With his wife and two infant daughters he came in 1817 to the

town which the Nyes and General Kendall, together with enterprising newcomers like the Connors and the Totmans, were developing up the river, three miles above Ticonic Falls. He took residence and developed a farm at Nye's Corner, where a road from Fairfield Center enters the main highway from Waterville to Skowhegan. The farm was strategically located between the only ferries which regularly operated across the Kennebec between Kendalls Mills and Skowhegan Village. Only a few rods below the Bryant farm was Noble's Ferry, and a half mile up stream was the longer lived and better known Pishon's Ferry.

From the Bryant diary it is easy to discern that the principal Kennebec crop in those years was corn. Astounded as we are at the local records which show large quantities of wheat and oats, those records bear out the Bryant notations concerning the supremacy of corn. The hay crop, too, was important, but for a different reason than its worth today. Now it is fed to the big herds of milk cattle, for whose product the huge trucks of the commercial dairies come to the farmers' very barn door. In William Bryant's time comparatively little hay was used to feed milk cows. The bulk of every farmer's hay went to his horses and oxen. Every year, when William Connor started for the "Saplin," near Moosehead Lake, for his lumbering operations, he gathered ox teams from all around. When Bryant's son Cyrus was big enough to handle a team, he took six yoke of his father's oxen up to the "Saplin."

William Bryant raised a lot of corn, and from planting to harvest he watched the weather with anxious eye. His wife had some kind of formula for predicting the kind of summer each year would bring. The diary does not explain exactly what the formula was, but it was apparently something like the time-honored predictions based on Ground Hog Day. Anyhow, Mrs. Bryant's fateful day was January 25. On that date in 1843, William recorded in the diary: "Clear, fair and cold. According to my wife's system we shall have a good corn season, notwithstanding the Millerites are preaching that the world will be destroyed in April."

Most of the old diaries and journals which include the year 1843, refer to the Millerites, and a careful reader can sense a feeling of trepidation and awe, even when the writer was obviously not in sympathy with the sect. Perhaps those Millerites

were correct. One had better not to be too sure there would be any world at all by next May. There is definitely apparent relief in the later accounts of what actually happened. On the appointed April day, the followers of the fanatic Miller donned white clothes and assembled on roofs or hill tops to await the promised end. Their disillusionment broke up the sect, and a generation afterward few people remembered them. But on that day when William Bryant casually mentioned them in connection with his wife's weather predictions, those now forgotten Millerites were the main concern of thousands of people.

Alas for the value of Mrs. Bryant's system, 1843 turned out to be anything except a good year for corn. It wasn't so bad as the "Year of No Summer," which had occurred before the Bryants came to Maine, but it was bad enough. On May 19, says the diary, "Stephen Nye and Joseph Hubbard finished planting my corn this day. They dropped the seed directly on the hog manure before they put on any earth, and if the corn comes up well I shall think I have been too particular in planting corn. If they are right, I have been wrong all my life. But I think it will not come up. I have about determined to plant it over." And plant it over he did, for on May 29 he wrote: "We began to plant our corn over this day. I soaked the seed in strong, warm pickle."

By June 16 the corn had come up, but it didn't look right to this experienced farmer. "My corn," he wrote, "has not looked so slim for a great number of years." By July 6th the corn was eight inches high. By the 20th it had begun to spindle, but Bryant lamented: "My corn is standing still, hasn't grown an inch the past week." On August 4th he was exceedingly pessimistic, noting, "Corn almost et up by worms," and a week later it was "two thirds of my corn has silked, the rest spoiled by worms."

When September arrived, Bryant was sure he didn't have "one ear of corn filled out." On the 26th of that month he dolefully recorded, "I have cut up for fodder the most of my corn." That, in short, was the outcome of Lydia Bryant's January prediction of a "good corn year."

The Bryants had five children. The oldest, Mary, born in Massachusetts in 1810, married the prominent lumberman William Connor and became the mother of Maine's Civil War hero and governor, Seldon Connor. Harriet, born also in Massachu-

setts, married into the Drew family. A year after her arrival in Fairfield, Mrs. Bryant presented her husband with twins, Cyrus and Susan. The former succeeded his father as farmer and lived to a ripe old age, all his years in Fairfield. His sister Susan married Nahum Totman, and thus through the marriage of his daughters, William Bryant became allied to two of the town's most prominent citizens, the Connors and the Totmans. The fifth child was Haley, the boy with itching feet, whose departure to Australia we have recorded in a previous chapter.

William Bryant saw a lot of those floods we found worthy of mention in the chapter "Hell and High Water." In the summer of 1832 he wrote: "The last winter was the coldest known for many years, and continued to the 11th of April. After a warm spell it grew cold again on the 23rd. That morning my well was scum over and manure froze in the barn. Planted some corn on May 11. On the 19th it began to rain and rained powerfully through the 21st. On May 22 was the highest freshet ever known on the Kennebec." That was the Fairfield farmer's only reference to the greatest torrent of water which, until the year 1936, has come down the Kennebec. March, 1846, saw another freshet that impressed the Bryants. "The river rises fast, and I think we shall have the highest freshet since 1832. Now at 11 o'clock the water is over the Corner bridge. The ice is dammed up below Noble's Ferry."

Any reader of old-time diaries is struck by how infrequently they mention events which a later perspective revealed to be important. The present writer has seen the journal kept by a prominent college professor from 1860 to 1866. That journal is so exclusively concerned with personal affairs that one can read it from beginning to end and never suspect that the nation was then engaged in a great civil war. The same is partially true of William Bryant's diary. These Maine farmers were not unmindful of national affairs. Some of them were deeply immersed in local politics. But they were first of all intent on getting an honest living and on seeing their children started on useful, worthy lives. They were folk who strictly minded their own business and minded it well.

In all the years of our internecine conflict, when many Fairfield boys marched away with the Union army, William Bryant saw fit to mention the war just twice. In 1862 he noted that Sel-

don Connor had left for Fort Monroe. On May 10, 1865, he wrote: "General Lee, the rebel, surrendered his army this day." Just once, twenty years earlier, had William mentioned that grandson who was to become a general and a governor of Maine. That was on February 27, 1845: "Gideon Wells' colt met with a fright, run into William Connor's entry and knocked down his wife and son Seldon." That was perhaps the only time anybody or anything knocked down Seldon Connor until his foot was shattered by a Civil War shell.

If the Bryant diary neglects the War Between the States, it nevertheless shows William's interest in other public events. In 1839, his pen was stirred to action by an event which affected Maine citizens more closely than did the opening weeks of the Civil War. On February 23, 1849, Bryant wrote: "All is bustle here respecting the northeastern boundary. Two hundred men started about a fortnight ago to drive off trespassers. The Governor informs us that other militia to the number of 1500 have marched for the boundary line, and he has called for a draft of 8000 more. My wife is fixing Cyrus' stockings and washing them with tears. But Cyrus has returned home and got clear of the draft this time."

This reference is to the Aroostook War, a bloodless but exciting matter while it lasted. It was the uprising of Maine people, especially the inhabitants of Aroostook, against the boundary claims of Canadians. It was a part of the long dispute that caused Daniel Webster and several of our presidents to stop at the Jed Prouty Tavern in Bucksport. Not a shot was fired, but excitement continued for several years, and tempers were violently aroused. Finally the Webster-Ashburton treaty settled the dispute peacefully.

Extant is an original holograph copy of military orders issued to bring the Aroostook War to a close. The full text is worth recording.

Headquarters, Augusta,
GENERAL ORDER No. 30 March 30, 1839

Major Gen. Isaac Hodsdon, commanding the state troops in actual service on the northeastern frontier, will leave of the detachment from the third division one company of light infantry, under the command of a field officer, at Fort Fairfield and at the Mount of the Presque Isle on the Aroostook,

for the purpose of protecting public property, until a sufficient civil force is procured by the Land Agent for that object.

Gen. Hodsdon will forthwith return with the remaining portion of the detachment from the third division to the city of Bangor, and he will report his command by companies or larger divisions, as they arrive, to the Adjutant General at that place. The detachment from the second division will without delay return to Bangor under Brigadier Gen. Bachelder, who will report his command as the several companies arrive.

The officer left in command at Fort Fairfield and at the Presque Isle, on being notified by the Land Agent that a sufficient civil force has been procured to enable him to protect the public property, will immediately retire to Bangor with his command and report to the Adjutant General. Brigadier Gen. Bachelder will leave a guard at Township No. 10 on the Aroostook Road, sufficient to protect public stores as may from necessity be left at that fort. This guard will be subject to the orders of the Acting Quartermaster General.

Deeming it unnecessary longer to continue a military force on the northeastern frontier, the Commander-in-Chief directs that the militia be discharged without delay; and he takes this occasion to express to the detachments from the second and third divisions his entire satisfaction with the manner in which they obeyed the call into the service of the state for the protection of the rights and honor of Maine; and their general conduct while in the public service, as reported by their respective commanding officers, merits, as it receives, his warm approbation. Called into service at a season unusual for military operations, without preparation and without experience, much inconvenience, if not actual suffering, must have been felt by the detachments on duty. It has been the intention of the Commander-in-Chief to make the condition one of as much comfort as the nature of the service would permit; and the zeal and alacrity with which they have obeyed the call for their aid is sure evidence that Maine can rely with perfect confidence on the patriotism of her citizen soldiery for the protection of her honor and the vindication of her rights.

By the Commander-in-Chief
A. B. THOMPSON, Adj't. Gen.

In the winter of 1920-21 I had the rare privilege of talking with an old man who remembered that Aroostook War. He was an inhabitant of the little town of Eagle Lake and had lived all his life in that region. Then over ninety years old, he told me, on one winter evening in front of the blazing log fire in the little hotel office, his recollections of early Aroostook days. All goods from the outside world were brought by tote team all the way from Bangor. Moose were so plentiful that often as many as a hundred carcasses were left on the ice surface of the lake for the wolves to eat, the hunters valuing only the hides. Interesting

as were many of these incidents, it was the old man's reference to the Aroostook War that gave me unique information. He was twelve years old when the trouble broke out, and he recalled vividly his own boyish part in the conflict. He never fired a shot through all the trouble, he said, but he did engage in sabotage. He told of it this way: "Son, did you ever hear of sabotage till the papers started telling about it during our war with the Germans? Well, neither did I, but I committed it 'way back in 1838."

Young men and boys, said the old man, would go into the Canadian woods and cut big gashes in the great pines destined for British naval and merchant masts, rendering those huge timbers unfit for that particular use. That was Maine's sabotage during the Aroostook War.

It was this old man of Eagle Lake who taught me the importance of ship tonnage in the old days of sail. As he talked on about that once great industry of getting out pines for masts to be transported to the shipyards of Great Britain, I was struck by the fact that he never once referred to thousands of board feet or any other such quantity. His references were always to so many tons of ship masts. That is indeed novel information to us a century later. Those giant masts which Elijah Kellogg and other writers have told us so much about were shipped to England not by the foot, but by the ton.

Holidays meant little to William Bryant and his neighbors. We know that, more than once during Bryant's life in Fairfield, the Fourth of July was celebrated in near-by Waterville by fireworks and scarcely less fiery orations. So far as we know, William never attended those functions in the Elm City. On almost every July 4th he was at work in his cornfield. But he did recognize Thanksgiving Day, which was indeed the big homecoming day in all New England. To the Bryants, however, it did not always mean a gathering at the home farm. As the children married and left home, William and his wife sometimes joined a daughter in Kendalls Mills in her own home for Thanksgiving. Even then the day was not free from labor. William couldn't leave until the morning chores were done, and he had to get home in time for milking. His wife too was not idle, even though she left for the Mills before he did. Thus the record for November 16, 1848, tells us: "Thanksgiving Day. My wife spent the day at

Nahum Totman's and attended at the toll house until I went there and took my dinner. Now in the evening we are home alone." There is a note of sadness in that phrase "home alone." Haley had just departed for Pennsylvania. Cyrus and his wife were with her family in Vassalboro. The three girls were all married and in homes of their own. A lot of people know just how William and Lydia Bryant felt at the end of that Thanksgiving Day a hundred years ago.

The diary reveals how little attention was paid to Christmas in the Kennebec Valley at that time. On December 25, 1836, William wrote: "Rain and warm. High freshet. Ice started down at 9 or 10 o'clock." The next year he spent December 25th by going "to Waterville with Gideon Wells on business; the first thawey day for a week past." On Christmas Day in 1838, William "killed two small boned hogs, very fat, weighed about 300 pounds each." On the following Christmas Day, William Connor started for the woods, taking Bryant's oxen among other teams. On the 1841 Christmas Day, Bryant worked hard all day. "We have had a hard time breaking a wood road in my swail to get alders for wood." On December 25, 1844, according to the diary, "Haley started with William Connor's two six-ox teams, to go 10 or 12 miles above The Forks, on 10,000 acres." On December 25, 1847, "Cyrus started for the woods for Chase and Webster on wheels." On Christmas Day in 1852, William Connor's ox teams were again on the way to the big woods, on a day of light rain and slushy traveling. There was no wheeling and no slush on Christmas Day in 1853, but "it began to snow last evening between five and six o'clock and snowed all night and all the forenoon; the snow fell in heaps." On December 25, 1855, Bryant made no mention of any Christmas observance, but solemnly recorded that "Charles Bradbury was killed last Saturday by running foul of another wagon." Two years later, December 25th brought snow in the morning so that by noon William Connor could start for the woods on runners.

Not until 1865 does William Bryant's diary mention the word Christmas. In that year he wrote: "Christmas. Fair and cold. I am very feeble, was taken bleeding at the nose for the third time in one week." At last, at the close of the Civil War, Christmas was a day of observance in the Kennebec Valley. But

even then, the aged William Bryant mentions no gifts, no celebration, no Christmas tree.

One of Waterville's most eventful occasions did not escape Bryant's notice. On November 29, 1849, he recorded: "The cars arrived at Waterville this day for the first time. A great day for Waterville." That, of course, was the building of the first railroad line to enter Waterville, the Androscoggin and Kennebec, from Portland via Lewiston.

William Bryant kept careful financial accounts, as well as a diary. Those accounts reveal, as do many similar family records, the prevailing practice of a father's claim to sons' wages until the boys reached the age of twenty-one. On June 11, 1832, when Cyrus was thirteen years old, the father set down this item: "Herman Nye, to Cyrus planting one day, 25 cents." A year later an entry reads: "Charles Pishon, to Cyrus and my oxen to haul lumber out of the river." That was a real job for a fourteen year old boy. In 1833 the father collected from Isaac Chase fifty cents for "Cyrus two days haying." In 1834 it was "Thomas Connor, 25 cents for Cyrus hoeing corn one day." When Haley was fourteen, in 1837, the father received from William Connor \$26.00 for Haley's four months' wages.

Wages weren't high in those days, but when anyone could work out for cash, instead of exchange of work, it was decidedly welcome. Most work was in exchange for commodities, and credit was long on both sides. How a smart man like William Bryant arranged matters when his older son became of age is interesting. On April 15, 1842, the diary tells us, "Cyrus started for the Dead Water in Vassalboro to work for Nahum and Ezra Totman at \$14 a month. This day Owen Spalding began work for me for four months at \$6.50 per month." Cyrus was now his own master and could demand wages. His father at once saw the advantage of allowing him to work away from home and hire another youth for less than half the wages Cyrus could demand.

Early in his Fairfield career William Bryant made a momentous decision; he became a Universalist. There was a lot of feeling against that liberal sect, but Sylvanus Cobb and other leaders had given it a stronghold at Waterville, and it began making inroads into the Baptist and Congregationalist territories up the river. In 1838 no one suspected that one day the Universalists would include Fairfield's most prominent families

and have its most prosperous church, for in that year William Bryant set down in his diary: "Levi Barrett preached at the ferry school house the third time. He is the first Universal preacher at this place that almost all admire to hear." On December 18, 1838, William and his son-in-law, George Drew, went to the meeting-house to hear the Universalist, Mr. Henry, and they had a cold time returning home.

By 1842 the whole Bryant family had become interested in Universalism, and all attended a three-day meeting at Canaan. On January 19, 1858, the diary tells us, there was a great Universalist levee at Bunker's Hall. "It was so crowded," wrote William, "that we had to stand on our feet, which was very tiresome." Soon afterwards, he tells us that Susan had gone to Augusta for the Universalist convention. There is something especially fitting in the last entry in the Bryant diary. It is dated February 6, 1867, and consists of one short sentence: "I don't go to meeting today." A few weeks later he was stricken with paralysis and died on June 15 at the home of his daughter Susan, in a house still standing on Island Avenue in Fairfield.

Many years ago memorial windows to William and Lydia Bryant and to Nahum and Susan Totman, were placed in the Fairfield Universalist Church. When the Universalist denomination closed its Fairfield church and later sold the edifice, Mrs. Christine Hume, great-granddaughter of the Bryants and granddaughter of Nahum and Susan Totman, had those windows appropriately removed to the Methodist Church, the oldest meeting-house in Fairfield Village.

Before he came to Fairfield, William Bryant had already had an interesting career. He assisted at the launching of the new nation's famous battleship, the frigate Constitution, "Old Ironsides," and as a U. S. seaman boarded her for her first voyage. His son Cyrus recalled one of his father's many stories about the ship. About two weeks out of Boston, on that first voyage, a heavy gale put fright into many of the crew who were going to sea for the first time. Some cried and prayed while others cursed lustily. One vociferous Irishman ended his appeal to the Deity with these words: "And we thank Thee, O Lord, that we have only twelve months and a fortnight longer to stay on this ship."

The British practice of impressing sailors into the service, without scrupulous regard for their nationality, was soon to be a major cause of the War of 1812. Nefarious press gangs drugged and shanghaied many a helpless American seaman on leave in a British port. When "Old Ironsides" was once anchored at Bristol, England, some of her crew went ashore, including William Bryant. Chased by a press gang, several of his comrades were captured, but the more agile Bryant managed to escape and get back on board his own ship.

May 22, 1858, was a day from which William Bryant never fully recovered. Lydia, who had stood at his side for more than half a century, died on that day. His entry in the diary was longer than usual: "My dear wife has been very sick. When told that she must leave us, she gave up immediately and requested some acts to be performed. With perfect resignation she died at 8 P. M. on Saturday the 22nd. Just before she died she called for Haley's picture (he was in far away Australia) and gave it a hearty embrace. I had the company of that blessed woman for 53 years to counsel and assist me in all my duties, trials and comforts. I praise God for such a wife."

During the last eight years of the diary record, there is constant mention of William's unceasing awareness of his loss. On January 5, 1859, he wrote: "I am this day 78 years old. If my dear wife had lived to the 31st of this month, she would have been the same age." The next December William had a dream so vivid that he felt compelled to record it. "I dreamed I had been away and on my return I saw several persons and then met my dear wife. I took her in my arms and then sat with her on my knee." Just before the eventful day of Fort Sumter, William Bryant's thoughts were not on impending war. "I am 80 years old this day (January 5, 1861). I have not lost a tooth nor had a toothache for over twelve years. My hair is almost as black as when I was young. But I feel weak and not worth much, and I am lonesome, so very lonesome."

By New Year's of 1865, William Bryant, having beaten the allotted three score and ten by fifteen years, knew that the end was near. "I am failing. My eyesight has failed me much. I think I shall not be here long. Amen." But on April 5, 1866, he could still record fond memories: "61 years ago this day I was married." Even as late as January 5, 1867, he could still write

in the beloved book. "I am 86 years old this day. I am not smart, but I saw wood, sleep and eat well." Two weeks later he wrote, "I feel I shall not write much more in this book." Then, on February 6, 1867, came the last item, "I don't go to meeting this day."

Such was the life of a simple farmer of the Kennebec Valley in its early years. But he was more than an ordinary farmer; he was a public citizen of considerable repute. For two sessions he was representative to the Massachusetts General Court, in 1819 and 1820, making the long trip to Boston as a legislator. After Maine became a state, he represented Fairfield at the legislative sessions in Portland in 1826 and 1828. Nineteen times he was elected selectman of Fairfield. Twenty years after his death, the *Fairfield Journal* recalled that "William Bryant could tell the financial standing of the town any day of the week and any week of the year." Such was the man who, in our valley of the Kennebec when other men were tense and excited about Buchanan's inauguration, said "Let us wait and see."

Chapter XXII

KENNEBEC HERITAGE

EVERY part of the United States claims a peculiar heritage, a set of traditions and folk-ways distinctly its own. Neither rapid communication nor increasing transfers of population can wholly eradicate these differences. Traits from pioneer days cling tenaciously in certain localities. What does the modern culture-pattern of the Kennebec inherit from the days of Elihu Bowerman, Obadiah Williams and Joseph Weston, or from the time of the stage-coach, the river steamboat and the narrow gauge?

In other parts of the country folks contend that, while you may not be able to tell a Maine man when you see him, you can certainly tell him when you hear him. Where did he get those flat vowels and unsounded consonants? Where else in the whole nation do hunters shoot "patridges" with "catridges"? Where else do people say "sor" for saw; where else do they pronounce *manner* and *manna* exactly alike; and where else is a girl named Etta called "Etter"?

In spite of these aspersions upon their speech, there are plenty of Maine folk who regret the almost complete disappearance of old pronunciations—"ile" and "bile" for oil and boil, owl and cow spoken as if each had two syllables, and the prolonged nasal sounds in mountain and towel. They miss the once familiar sounds "rord," "hoorp," "cort," and "storn" for road, hoop, coat, and stone. Many of them persist in using the broad *a* in bath, half, calf, and glass. They still like to put a load of "loom" on the front lawn.

Short *e* for short *a* is a common transference all over the United States. "Ketch" for catch is quite as likely to be heard in Texas as in Maine. But not so the Maine trick of changing short *e* to long *a*. In Central Maine an old and honored family

are the Getchells. For them one of Waterville's streets is named. One day, as I was waiting my turn in a barber shop, an aged gentleman stuck his head in the door and asked the barber, "Have you 'gut' the key to the 'Gaytchell' Street Church?"

My grandmother and her contemporaries in Western Maine always said "gooms" for gums, "toss'l" for tassel, "trof" for trough, and "mushmelon" for muskmelon; and down the years since Grandmother's day all of us true natives of Maine still pronounce the personal name Daniel as two syllables, entirely omitting the *i*.

Proverbial expressions and pungent phrases from Central Maine are heard all over the country, because a lot of Maine folks had itching feet. When they left the Kennebec Valley for Ohio or California, or any other part of the land, they took with them many an expression which, as a Maine man would say, simply "caught on."

"They weigh more or less, according to," says a Kennebec old timer. According to what? He doesn't say. It's just "according to." How better can one express the indolence of sitting still doing nothing, than by saying, "Jim's just the same as usual; he's still bottoming chairs"? Only in Maine or Vermont, for obvious reason, is one likely to hear, even today, "dry as a covered bridge."

"Take this; it'll make the pain *easen* up. You've been *peaked* now three days *hand running*. P'raps you need some air. This room's *hot as a mink*. We *gut* to *git* that pain out of your *in-nards*. Tell Marthy if she can't clean this room, *leastwise* she can give it a *lick and a promise*. Don't ask me to get Hannah over here. I don't *mess with* that tribe. But the next time I come, I want to see you quit *peeling away*. And don't get *pernickety* with me. I may be *slow as a hard-wood growth*, but folks say I *spend well* and I ain't too *stupidicious*. But I ain't putting up with no *skermudgins*."

Do Maine people really talk like that? Not all of them of course, but some of them still do, and almost everyone born in Maine, at some time or other uses at least one of those expressions. All up and down the Kennebec Valley, as well as elsewhere in the state, you'll hear about some fellow in his cups, who went *amplifying* down the road; about somebody going the wrong way, who *got a back-end start*; and how if you want your car

repaired, go to old Jim, "cause he can beat the other garage men *all holler*." Folks insist, indeed, that Jim is the fellow to go to if anything *gits out of fix*.

When a Maine man has more work than he can do, he is *cuss-driv*. When things are going well with him, he has *the world by the horns on a downhill haul*. If times are troublesome, he has *a hard row to hoe*. If he is irritated, he is *all het up*; if pleased, he's *tickled pink*. If the sky shows low threatening clouds, the weather is *lowry*. If it is snowing hard, the snow is *making fast*, and it's a good time to *house up*.

If there is one tradition about Maine which is harder than any other to refute, it is "pie for breakfast." Not long ago a Maine couple, traveling across the continent, stopped over night with distant relatives in Idaho, who themselves had never been east of the Mississippi. In special recognition of the visitors from Maine, the hostess served at breakfast big wedges of custard pie. The guests ate it without comment, and probably the Idaho family never learned that it was the Maine couple's first experience with pie for breakfast.

But make no mistake about it. In the middle of the last century, pie was a common dish on many a central Maine breakfast table. In those days breakfast, at five or six o'clock in the morning, was and had to be a wholesome, filling meal. It had to keep a man going until noon. He had never heard of *éclairs* or *parfaits* or French pastries, but, by golly, he knew pie and he wanted it three times a day. But that was long ago. Customs do change, even in Maine.

The Kennebec heritage, is, however, neither language nor pie for breakfast. Nor is it the alleged Maine reticence. When anybody wants to emphasize taciturnity or even the ability to be "eloquent with silence," he tells some story about Maine or Vermont. Have you ever listened to one end of a telephone conversation between two women in Central Maine? If you have, it's just like the same kind of conversation anywhere else. It can hardly be characterized as reticent. Did you ever hear a group of men talking politics in the village store? Not exactly taciturn.

We suspect this assumption about what someone has called the "gift of ungab" stems from acquaintance with the fishermen and lobstermen of the Maine coast. Those stalwart, independent men, justly praised for their integrity and their thrift, are never

outspoken with strangers. They "clam up" or give only monosyllabic answers to a visitor's questions—until they come to know him. Then they will talk; then they will reveal that they are some of the deepest thinking and the best informed men you will find anywhere in the world. Their supposed taciturnity is neither indifference nor shyness. It is just a determination that a fellow should mind his own business and not talk until he has something to say that he knows the other fellow wants to hear.

Reticence is hardly a characteristic of the Kennebec natives, and, according to local tradition, it never was. Here blossomed the politicians who glibly talked their way to Augusta and even to Washington. Here those practitioners vulgarly called "mouth-pieces" flourished. Here the clergy were so voluble that some of them even debated theology with each other in the columns of the local press. When a leading layman quarreled violently with his pastor in one of the larger towns of the Kennebec Valley in the 1870's, he did what in slang we often tell a rabble-rouser to do; he went out and hired a hall, where he conducted his own services in opposition to the pastor's. Yes, they knew the language and they used it—our Kennebec forebears; and they left trunkfuls of diaries and journals, lengthy letters and carefully written memoirs to prove it. They sometimes seemed to crawl into their shells when strangers appeared. They weren't showing off before visitors, but definitely they were not clams.

Maine people have the reputation of being conservative, not to say reactionary. Ever since the presidential election of 1936, Maine and Vermont have been considered the last stands of hide-bound conservative politics. Yet these are the states that sent George Aiken and Margaret Chase Smith to the Senate, neither of them noted for conservatism. Maine people, however, are quite willing to be classed with Vermonsters. I shall long remember the way I was once greeted by a prominent citizen of the Green Mountain state. "I'm so glad to see a man from Maine," he said. "Our two states have so much in common, with the great foreign land of New Hampshire between us."

Three things indeed have given Maine its reputation for conservatism: politics, prohibition, and religion. It is hard to make our friends in other states believe that Democrat in Maine is not the same as Damyankee in the South, that ever since 1851 Maine's prohibitory law made Maine as dry as the Sahara and

as lifeless, and that Maine is one of the last grim stands of fundamentalist religion. Maine isn't ashamed of any of these things. In spite of the control by one party, with few interruptions, for nearly a hundred years, she thinks her politics are on a high level and will bear inspection from any quarter. She has never contended that prohibition kept out the bootlegger, and she always winked at the making of hard cider, on the theory, of course, that it was the only way to make vinegar. But she'll put up an argument with anyone in her insistence that Neal Dow's prohibitory law made her a cleaner state than many of the others with their high or low license. And, though you may not believe it, she'll tell you proudly that religious liberty in Maine means just what the words say. Of course she has Protestant fundamentalists, staunch Catholics, orthodox Jews. But she has also thousands of religious liberals who are not only tolerated, but respected.

If the Kennebec heritage is not the Maine accent or pie for breakfast, if it is not reticence in speech, if it is not unrelenting conservatism, what is it? Having cleared some of the underbrush on this topic, it is time we took a look at the stalwart trees.

The word that best describes that heritage is moderation. Temperance in all things, neither too much nor too little, has been the guiding spirit on the Kennebec ever since Winslow's men hewed the timbers of Fort Halifax. When John McKechnie of Waterville told his neighbors they must get ready to sell needed supplies to Arnold's army as it came up the river in 1775, he was asked how much stuff Arnold wanted. "Don't know for sure till he gets here," said McKechnie. "I only know what he ought to have—enough, but not too much." When summer residents once remonstrated with a Kennebec native for not continuing to cut their lawns as he did earlier in the summer, he had his explanation ready. "It takes just \$66 to see me through the winter, and by Judas I've got it."

So it is that, from pioneer times, people of the Kennebec Valley have exhibited thrift without stagnation. They don't want to waste money, but they know that certain things must be done. In a small Kennebec town, a few years ago, the moderator was demanding action on an article. "Article 16," he said, "to see what sum the town will raise to cut bushes for the ensuing year.

What is the pleasure of the town?" Silence. "Come, come, let's keep this meeting moving. What is the pleasure of the town?" At last an old fellow arose in the rear of the room, shifted his cud to the other side of his mouth, and said, "Mr. Moderator, tain't no pleasure, but I move we raise \$600."

In spite of the prevalence of partial payment plans and alluring inducements to mortgage the future, Maine still has plenty of people who know "the glory of doing without." What they can't pay for, cash on the barrel-head, they don't have. Elihu Bowerman and his family, in their rough cabin at North Fairfield, went without flour or sugar all one winter. They were mighty glad when spring brought the sweet maple sap (that could be boiled down to syrup and sugar), but they didn't starve. William Bryant, cautious and prudent with his own or the town's finances, carefully planned each expenditure, but he was wise enough to know that young Haley's insistence on going to Australia was no time for excessive thrift. Somehow he dug up \$200 to help Haley on his way.

Thrift dictated that the inhabitants across the river from each other at Waterville and Winslow might well go their separate ways. But that kind of thrift meant stagnation. So they put up their hard earned dollars to buy stock in the bridge. Thrift advised that the steamship owners of Gardiner and Hallo-well sell out to the wealthy Commodore Vanderbilt, salt down their dollars, and quit the river forever. But it was their river; they could not stagnate on its banks. So they fought the Commodore in the bitterest price-cutting war the Valley has ever seen. If the Commodore cut the round trip fare to Boston to twenty-five cents, they would give a passenger a free ride and throw in a couple of meals. It is a wonder that those ruthless methods didn't ruin everybody in the game, but finally the Kennebeckers won out, and it was the Commodore, not the Gardiner boatmen, who left the river.

Though you might not suspect it, as you travel through the Valley today, there are still many of the Kennebec people who have learned to make the most of what they have. Instead of lamenting their hard luck or longing for greener pastures, they do the best they can with the things at hand. They aren't fooled by the lush promises of Russell Conwell's "Acres of Diamonds"; they don't expect to strike oil down in the back pasture. There's

no gold in them thair hills. But there are things out in the barn and up under the eaves that come in mighty handy on a rainy day.

This power of adjustment, this cutting the garment to the cloth, is something the Kennebec people just had to learn from the very nature of the land. In a country where you have to sharpen the sheeps' noses so they can graze between the rocks, life is a bit different from what it is on the stoneless, black soil of the prairies. When a visitor admires those double-thick stone walls that may still be found on Kennebec farms, we hope he doesn't think they were built just for the fun of it, or because stump or rail fencing wasn't to be had. No indeed! Those stone walls are one of the best examples of thrift without stagnation. If crops were to grow, those rocks must be removed from the fields. "Get out the rocks or stagnate," said nature. "All right," said the Maine farmer. "If that's the law, I'll make the most of it. If I've got to get out the rocks, I'll make fences out of them."

However much a man born in the Kennebec Valley may have become infected by the spending virus that now feeds on American society, he knows in his heart that the road to success is not royal spending, but humble saving. *Spend a little less than you earn.* That is his rule of economics, and the farms which were the back-bone of Maine's early economy were built on that rule. But Maine thrift is not miserliness. Not for the storing up of wealth to please his own eyes did the Maine pioneer farmer scrape and save, but to make sure that each son, as he grew to manhood, could be supplied with a neighboring farm. They were not greedy land-grabbers, as they have been accused of being; they acquired more and more land, prompted by the best kind of thrift—the thrift that cares for the next generation, and cares for it not with wealth lavished on the spendthrift sons of millionaires, but with a parcel of soil, from which the son, by his own hard labor, must coax his own living and his own savings.

It is this sense of the need of progress without sacrificing thrift which gave the Kennebec people a high sense of responsibility. In every Maine town in the middle of the twentieth century, we suspect the visitor will find plenty of "buck-passers," just as he will find them everywhere else in the United States. Doubtless there were some of them around in the days of William Bryant, Ambrose Howard, and Moses Appleton. But there were

plenty of others like those three stalwart citizens of the Kennebec, who were men of responsibility. They didn't blame misfortune on the times or the climate, or least of all on the neighbors. They would have appreciated a story which that great Quaker story-teller and great religious mystic, Rufus Jones, used to tell. A man was once driving a horse and buggy along a country road. As he felt the vehicle slanting toward the rear and as he continued to view the horses's head at an upward angle for mile after mile, he finally stopped where an old fellow was cutting bushes beside the road. "Tell me," said the traveler, "how long is this cussed hill? I've been climbing it for miles." "Huh!" drawled the bush-cutter, "there ain't no hill. You've just lost your hind wheels."

To this day the Kennebec native has a distaste for political systems under which individual responsibility is hard to place. His fear of stagnation makes him realize that times do change, and that politics and economics can never again be the same as they were in grandfather's day. But he regrets every removal of responsibility from the town to the state, from the state to the federal government. He knows when they do something for him down at Augusta, it's not only impersonal, but likely to boomerang in demands upon him. He who pays the piper calls the tune, and from the earliest settlements the Kennebec people have wanted just as few tunes as possible called from Augusta or Washington. He wants to know the men who spend his taxes. He will trust them just as far as he wants them to trust him, and no farther. In one Central Maine town a fund was recently being raised by subscription for a public project. One day an interested person from a neighboring town asked the committee chairman how much money had come in from the summer residents. "Don't know for sure," he replied, "but it's sizeable." "Do you mean to say you haven't counted it up?" asked the inquirer. "Course not," was the reply. "I don't touch that money till the whole committee can meet and tote it up."

Moderation is shown also in the Kennebec man's neat balance between suspended judgment and indecision. Probably not half a dozen people in the whole Valley ever heard of Herbert Spencer's reply to a newspaper reporter, but they would approve it. Spencer, the noted British philosopher, was already an aged man when the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth. On

that occasion a reporter asked Spencer what, in the philosopher's opinion had been the greatest discovery of the nineteenth century. Ignoring steamboat and railroad, telegraph and telephone, even the important Bessemer process of making steel—in short, ignoring all the material improvements the century had produced—Spencer replied, "The greatest discovery of the nineteenth century has been the discovery of the capacity for suspended judgment."

The Kennebec settlers were not impulsive folk; they took plenty of time. Much of what outsiders call Maine reticence springs from the Maine man's reluctance to "shoot his mouth off," to make an impulsive, unconsidered remark. In Waterville and Winslow, it took them half a century after the latter's incorporation to decide to build a bridge between the two communities. It took them half as long to separate the two into distinct towns, and they did that only when they became convinced that holding town meeting on opposite sides of the river in alternate years was no longer practical. Those early settlers weighed carefully the evidence on both sides of every proposal.

William Bryant's "wait and see" concerning the election of James Buchanan was typical of his neighbors up and down the Kennebec Valley. They were people who were reluctant to make up their minds until the evidence was in. That trait has of course resulted sometimes in excessive caution that has let an opportunity escape, but Maine people are convinced that more often it has enabled them to escape disaster. If they had been in a hurry, as some people advised, to build the proposed electric railroad from Skowhegan to Athens, they would have finished it just about in time for the highway trucks to take over the business. Their insistence on waiting for the evidence enabled them to foresee the rapid advance of highway transportation, and the Skowhegan-Athens electric railroad was one trolley line in which nobody lost a dollar, because the line was never built.

If the Kennebec people allowed no check on suspended judgment, they would be like the donkey between two stacks of hay, starving to death because he couldn't decide which one to eat. Decisions have to be made along the Kennebec, just as everywhere else; and when they must be made, a Maine man makes them on the best evidence he has. When Solyman Heath, on his way to California by prairie schooner in 1849, saw day after

day the dread cholera bring death to some fellow traveler, he had to reach a decision. Should he turn back with some discouraged returning travelers, or should he risk danger, disease and death by going on? He couldn't do both; he had to decide. And on the best evidence he could get, evidence that many others had gone through to the gold fields, he decided to go on.

Elihu Bowerman couldn't leave his wife permanently at a boarding house in Waterville. He had to take her, to endure with him the hardships of the Somerset wilderness, to a half-finished, floorless cabin, or he had to quit and go back to Massachusetts. There wasn't time for accumulating a year's experience as evidence; he had to decide on the evidence at hand. So young Mrs. Bowerman spent that terrible winter at North Fairfield, cold and hungry, and not seeing another woman for six months. John Poor would have preferred more time to accumulate all the evidence for his proposed railroad from Portland to Montreal. He might visit the Canadian city in the spring and leisurely win friends and influence people. But when events wouldn't wait, neither lack of evidence nor raging blizzard deterred him. He decided at once to make the tedious winter journey to Montreal.

The next time you hear stories about the slowness of Maine natives, their leisurely ways, their hesitation, their insistence on postponing agreement on the simplest business transactions, just remember that ever since Abraham Shurte held his council with the Abenakis at Ticonic Falls, these Maine Yankees have been folks who took their time, who tried always to wait until the evidence was in, but who were just as ready to come to firm, sound decisions when they had to make them.

Along with the reputation for conservatism, for excessive tardiness in accepting change, Maine people are considered notoriously independent. Few outsiders are willing to admit that Maine independence, from the earliest log-cabin days, has been tempered by neighborliness. The Maine settler learned early to mind his own business, and he expected other people to mind theirs. The greatest disgrace any family could suffer was to have help from the town. The poor house was a less respectable lodging than the jail. It was every man's duty to care for his own family, and to accumulate at least a little land and other property to leave to his sons. As the years went by, many a farmer along the Kennebec seemed to visitors "as independent as a hog on ice."

If the Maine Yankee's independence had been isolated and unfriendly; if his hatred of government interference, his aversion to unsolicited advice, his horror of debt, had made him a miserly, cold, unsympathetic creature, his independence would have been a curse to him and his state. But fortunately it was always mixed with neighborliness. Maine's famous fisherman-preacher, Rev. Arthur MacDougall of Bingham, pictures it this way. In the Maine hills a farmer gets up on a cold morning, goes to the barn while it is still dark, and milks his cows. As he returns to the house, dawn is just breaking. He looks across the valley to the house of his neighbor, a mile away. If he sees smoke coming from his neighbor's chimney, he carries the full milk pails leisurely into the house. But if no smoke rises from that chimney across the valley, he knows something is wrong. He dashes into the house, sets down the pails and tells his wife, "Can't wait for breakfast. Got to get over to Henry's. Something's wrong over there."

Deacon Simpson valued independence enough to know that every farmer had to look out for himself in ordinary times. But that fearful "Year of No Summer" was no ordinary time. Because he valued neighborliness more than he prized independence, Deacon Simpson doled out the precious kernels of corn that made possible renewed harvests along the Kennebec. The Augusta storekeeper who sold rum and gingerbread in 1804 knew that every one of his customers ought to be both honest enough and independent enough not to lean too heavily on the store's credit. He expected them to pay their bills and he sued them in the county court if they didn't. But he too knew the value of neighborliness; so he put in his accounts about one of his debtors these meaningful words, "I cancel his account. His house burned."

Moderation is the predominant Kennebec trait. That is the Valley's rich inheritance from its historic past. Conservatism tempered with enough progress to keep the team moving forward, thrift moderated by enough venture and daring to prevent stagnation, taking long enough to make up one's mind without forever sitting on the fence, and the kind of independence that never forgets that man is indeed his brother's keeper—that is the heritage which men and women of Maine may cherish as long as Our Lady Kennebec flows onward to the sea.

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